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PERSIANA,

THE

NYMPH OF THE SEA.

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A NOVEL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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PERSIANA,

THE

NYMPH OF THE SEA.

CHAPTER XII.

With generous ſcorn how oft haſt thou ſurvey'd,
Of court and town the noon-tide maſquerade;
Where ſwarms of knaves the vizor quite diſgrace;
And hide ſecure behind a naked face:
Where Nature's end of language is declin'd,
And men talk only to conceal their mind;
Where gen'rous hearts the greateſt hazard run,
And he who truſts a brother is undone.

YOUNG.

PERSIANA having promiſed to be Lord Normanton's, it was not long ere by his importunities ſhe was prevailed upon to fix the day for making him happy: an early one he petitioned

warmly for, and Mrs. Dennis was in all things his advocate: but a fortnight from that day, which was Wednesday the 20th of July, was the one she named, and from which by their united persuasions she could not be induced to recede.

My Lord talked of settlements, but of them she would hear nothing: but she could not prevent his bespeaking equipages, jewels, rich cloaths, &c. She wished very much that Mr. Bringloe should perform the ceremony; but of that there was little hope, for his friend continued in a languishing state, and would not be induced to part from him: one of his Lordship's domestic chaplains was therefore to officiate, and, as they were to be married by special licence, the ceremony

was

was to be performed in Mrs. Dennis's parlour.

As the day drew near, Lord Normanton's impatience ſeemed to increaſe with it. Mrs. Dennis frequently left the lovers together; at ſuch times his Lordſhip complained of the cruel diſtance at which Perſiana kept a man who might he ſaid now be deemed her huſband; as nothing was wanted to compleat their union but the repetition of a few words, neceſſary indeed to give the ſanction of *human laws*, but which in the eye of true *religion*, in *reaſon*, and *honour*, were really of no kind of conſequence.

As theſe kind of arguments were always urged with an air of impatient fondneſs, half ſerious half in jeſt, on her repelling thoſe liberties he ſeemed inclined to take, and which ſhe had

much innate and unaffected delicacy to permit, ſhe paſſed them over unheeded. But one evening, on Mrs. Dennis's leaving the room, he ſeated himſelf on the ſofa by her, ſaid ſo many fond and pleaſing things, propoſed ſo many agreeable plans which were to take place after their union, complained ſo pathetically of the coldneſs of her return to his ardent paſſion, that her ſoul became inſenſibly unuſually ſoftened: ſhe liſtened to him with ſweet complacency, whilſt the moſt bewitching languor beamed in her eyes, and the richeſt glow ſuffuſed her cheek.

He ſaw with tranſport the tender moment, and ſought inſenſibly to draw her on from the indulgence of ſlight freedoms to greater. At firſt not willing to appear lightly offended, ſhe repelled

repelled his impertinence, though with firmneſs yet with good humour: but finding him not ſo repulſed, her indignation was rouſed, and he found her ſo very much in earneſt, and ſo very angry, he gave over the attempt, and endeavoured to conciliate her reſentment by laying the whole blame on the impetuoſity and ardour of an ungovernable paſſion: but this he found by no means an eaſy taſk: at laſt, however, at the expence of many ſighs, tears, vows, &c. he gained a reluctant pardon, and took his leave.

With tears of offended pride and delicacy, Perſiana, on Mrs. Dennis's entrance, complained to her of her lover's behaviour; but was both aſoniſhed and diſpleaſed at finding herſelf ridiculed for her ſqueamiſhneſs and prudery to a man who might *reaſonably*

be looked upon as *already* her huſband, and blamed for the impolicy of hazarding his diſpleaſure by refuſing to gratify him.

With lightning flaſhing from her eyes, which dazzled thoſe of Mrs. Dennis, and actually called up a bluſh into her cheek, albeit unuſed to the vulgar ſuffuſion, Perſiana, with as much warmth of virtuous indignation as force of argument, combated the infamous principles, proteſting that ſhe would not ſtay another night in a houſe where ſhe was liable to be inſulted by ſuch actions, and ſuch a defence of them.

That virtuous matron would not give her leave to finiſh what ſhe had ſtill to ſay; but claſping her fondly in her arms, and fervently preſſing her lips to the cheek of our heroine, ſhe burſt

burſt into the warmeſt encomiums of her chaſte and pure ſentiments. "You were a ſtranger to me, my love," ſhe cried; "however charming, however prepoſſeſſing your appearance, ſo deceitful, alas! is the world, there is no truſting to the faireſt outſide. Ah! my dear, if you did but know as much of it as I do, you would not blame my caution: how did I know but that modeſt look might be aſſumed, whilſt every vice lay lurking at the heart: I will try her, ſaid I to myſelf, I will probe her inmoſt ſoul, by affecting principles which I hold in abhorrence, and if in complaiſance to me I find her wavering, I ſhall know what to think. I *have* tried you—I have diſcovered you to be the moſt virtuous, the beſt of girls, and now I take you unreſervedly to my heart: for my Lord,

I ſhall talk ſeverely to him: how *dares* he think of taking ſuch liberties in *my* houſe, and with a young lady under *my* protection! Yes, I ſhall rate him, never fear, my dear. Yet poor young man, he is very deplorably in love indeed; and if he makes proper conceſſions I think you muſt forgive him.

She then reiterated proteſtations of the moſt fervent friendſhip for our heroine, and by a farther diſplay of the moſt virtuous ſentiments, allayed the reſentment and ſuſpicion which was riſing in the mind of Perſiana, and ſent her to her repoſe with renovated ſpirits and innocent confidence.

As Mrs. Dennis had promiſed to talk to Lord Normanton in the morning, and bring him to a ſenſe of the atrociouſneſs of his conduct before he ſaw our heroine, they had a long conference

ference together before breakfaſt; after which ſhe went up ſtairs, and acquainting Perſiana with his real penitence, and making a number of fine ſpeeches for him, ſhe led her, though very reluctantly, to him, and a reconciliation took place, but not with perfect grace on the ſide of our heroine.

As the day appointed for the celebration of her marriage drew near, Perſiana's ſpirits ſunk in proportion, and ſhe marked it's approach with encreaſing apprehenſions: it was indeed to give her rank and ſplendour with a man by no means diſagreeable; yet one for whom, ſhe began to fear, that a more intimate acquaintance would not add to her eſteem and affection; he had not only treated her with indelicacy, but, from ſome late unguarded converſation, had ſhocked her

her with a libertiniſm of principle of which before ſhe had no idea.

She reflected with pain that it was now too late to recede: ſhe wiſhed to ſee Mr. Bringloe, that ſhe might unboſom herſelf to him; for in Mrs. Dennis ſhe had no great confidence, notwithſtanding her proteſtations of friendſhip; and ſhe had conceived no veneration for her judgment, though ſhe was neceſſitated to be directed entirely by it.

When ſhe appeared at breakfaſt, on the morning preceding the day appointed, her heavy eyes and pale cheeks gave evident tokens of a ſleepleſs and reſtleſs night; and ſhe looked altogether ſo indiſpoſed, that her noble lover was alarmed, and inſiſted upon her returning to her chamber as ſoon as breakfaſt was over, and trying

to

to compoſe herſelf. He ſaid he had ſome buſineſs preparatory to the happy morrow, which would occupy him till near dinner time, when he hoped to find her better; and that in the afternoon he would take her and Mrs. Dennis a little airing into the country, for its refreſhing breezes might recover her ſpirits.

Perſiana, though ſhe found no great pleaſure in her own reflections, yet was glad of any pretence to be by herſelf; and when Mrs. Dennis attended her to her chamber, pretended to be very ſleepy, which was really to deſire her abſence: and when that lady was preparing to leave the room, ſhe requeſted not to be diſturbed till dinner, as ſhe ſaid ſhe hoped an indulgence till that time would put her head quite to rights, (for her diſorder was very little more

more than a violent head ach;) and Mrs. Dennis promiſed her ſhe would give orders that ſhe ſhould not; ſhe herſelf, ſhe ſaid, being going out, and ſhould not return till near that time.

Sleep, though unexpected, ſtole upon her: ſhe awoke after ſome time, very much refreſhed. She aroſe, adjuſted her dreſs, and then, not finding it quite dinner time, ſhe paſſed into a little cloſet which was in her room, where ſhe had depoſited ſome books which Lord Normanton had preſented to her, and ſat down to read.

The cloſet in which ſhe was ſitting was divided from Mrs. Dennis's dreſſing room by a very thin partition. She heard that lady come home and go into her dreſſing room: preſently after a footman's rap announced his Lordſhip, and ſhe was juſt thinking of

going

going down ſtairs, when ſhe heard him come into the room to Mrs. Dennis, and, from the thinneſs of the partition, overheard their converſation, though it was by no means carried on in a high key.

"There," ſaid Mrs. Dennis, "is your Lordſhip's licence; tho' I really think it an unneceſſary piece of trouble: for ſo delightfully ignorant is your dulcinea, that ſhe would not know there was one wanting had not you informed her."

"There is no knowing what ſhe may take in her head; ſo I would chuſe to be provided with the appearance of every requiſite."

"Well then, my nephew ſays that it is word for word the ſame as a real licence, and that he has counterfeited the ſeals to a miracle, if ſhe ſhould chance

chance to know any thing about them."

"But have you tutored the man properly who plays the parſon?"

"I have. Would you have him introduced to night?"

"By no means, it might blow up our whole plot. This ſweet girl, tho' unacquainted with the world—that is, Mrs. Dennis, ſhe does not *yet* know there are ſuch devils in it as yourſelf and Bringloe——"

"And your Lordſhip. Bringloe is becoming a ſaint; you know he repents."

"Yes, after having *ſet* the game he boggles at its being drawn into the net. But, as I was going to ſay, ſhe would in a few minutes converſation detect the real ignorance of that fellow whom you make my domeſtic chaplain,

chaplain, and blow our ſcheme to the devil."

"Your Lordſhip gives yourſelf a monſtrous deal of trouble, when, in my humble opinion, it might have been all avoided, by making *proper* uſe of the many opportunities you have had."

"And you would really have had me ſo much of a brute as to uſe force? Upon my ſoul your ſex goes much farther lengths in wickedneſs than we men."

"Nay as to the *wickedneſs*, where is the difference between the man who ſwindles me out of my money by a deceitful tale or he who wreſts it from me by compulſion?"

"Why at leaſt it ſaves you from a terrible fright. But regarding my own pleaſure, I had rather lure my charmer

charmer to my arms by a little deception, than ſnatch imperfect joys with violence. But can I ſee how ſhe is? She is the moſt delightful girl in the world, and I feel I cannot live without her."

Amidſt the whirlwind of paſſions which this converſation raiſed in the boſom of Perſiana, ſhe retained ſufficient recollection to diſcern the neceſſity of concealing her knowledge of it. She ſoftly tho' haſtily quitted the cloſet and ſhut the door, and had juſt time to reſume her place on the bed, and hide her face in the pillow to conceal her emotions, when Mrs. Dennis entered.

On her repeated enquiries after her health in the tendereſt tone of voice, and moſt anxious manner, and inviting her down to dinner, Perſiana anſwered

ſwered that her head was ſtill ſo very painful that ſhe could not bear the light, nor had ſhe the leaſt appetite: but the other preſſed her ſo very much to have ſomething to eat, that at laſt ſhe ſaid ſhe had heard tea was beneficial in violent head achs, and if Mrs. Dennis would permit one of the ſervants to bring her a cup, ſhe thought ſhe ſhould like it, and a piece of toaſted biſcuit with it.

Mrs. Dennis quitted the room immediately in officious haſte, and left her innocent prey, now fully conſcious of the toils into which ſhe had fallen, to give free vent to the diſtraction of her griefs, and to revolve ſchemes to extricate herſelf from them.

Not a moment was to be loſt; yet what could be done? On this her

mind was occupied when the maid ſervant brought her tea.

She had wiped away her tears, but her eyes were ſwoln with weeping; her pale affrighted countenance ſo aſtoniſhed the girl, who was a good humoured young woman whom Mrs. Dennis had very lately taken into her ſervice, and who was much charmed with the affability of Perſiana, and ſhe expreſſed her concern in ſuch tender and artleſs terms, that our heroine, who had before formed ſome vague plan of engaging one of the ſervants to contribute to her eſcape, examined her face—(who is not, even without reflection, a phyſiognomiſt?)—and finding in it ſomething which pleaſed, bade her ſhut the door.

She did as ſhe was ordered, and came again to the bed ſide, on which

Perſiana

Perſiana was now ſitting. "You look like a good girl Fanny," ſaid ſhe.

"I hope I am, Madam"

"Have you conceived any diſlike to me?"

"To you! lackaday, Madam, there is nobody I likes half ſo well; for as I often ſays to our Thomas, to be ſure now Miſs is *my* eye."

"Well then, Fanny, you would not contribute to my ruin and deſtruction?"

"To *your* ruin, Madam! no: I would do any thing in the world to ſerve you."

"Well then, my dear Fanny, it is in your power greatly to ſerve me—to ſave me from ruin and deſtruction, with very little hazard to yourſelf, and you ſhall not go unrewarded."

"I am ſure I ſhould be proud to

ſerve your Ladyſhip, Madam; and when you are my Lady, Miſs, if you would take me into place in your family, I ſhould think myſelf the happieſt creature in the varſel world, for I can't ſay I like Madam Dennis much."

"I ſhall never be my Lady, Fanny, but that ſhall make no difference to you, for I will give you money *now* inſtead of wages by and by. The marriage is all an artifice, a vile contrivance to ruin me."

"Surely your Ladyſhip is miſtaken."

"I am not, Fanny, for I heard my Lord and your miſtreſs talking it over in her dreſſing room, as I ſat in my cloſet; ſo that all my dependance is upon you, my dear girl, to enable me to eſcape from this horrible plot, and

ſave

ſave me from deſtruction. Contrive the means, and here are five guineas as an earneſt of what I will do for you."

"It is a ſure thing I ſhould like to ſave ſo ſweet a lady from ſuch monſtrous wickedneſs," ſaid Fanny, taking the gold, a thouſand pleaſant ideas of becoming caps, bonnets, &c. connecting themſelves with it, but I have a very ſad head at contrivances, Madam."

"Cannot you let me out when the family are in bed?"

"Lackaday miſtreſs always takes the keys into her chamber. She is ſadly afraid of our getting out a-nights; but I always ſays——the old woman would not have looked for her daughter in the oven."

"You may open the windows."

"There are bells to all the ſhutters."

ters." She remained ſilent a moment, then ſuddenly cried——"A thought comes into my head."

"What is it, my dear Fanny?"

"As you are ſo ill, Madam, you will, as you often do, go to bed before my miſtreſs, and I ſhall attend you with the candle. I can manage to have the ſtreet door open, out of which you may walk inſtead of going up ſtairs: nobody will know but that you are in bed, and it will not be found out till morning that you are not."

"A delightful thought! and richly worth another guinea: here it is. And now my dear Fanny have you no acquaintance to whom I might ſafely go?"

"I have a ſiſter, a mantuamaker, as honeſt as daylight, not above three ſtreets off."

Fanny

Fanny then informed Perſiana of the name of her ſiſter, the number ſhe lived at, and the turnings which were to be made, which, as they were ſo few, our heroine, whoſe memory was very tenacious, was not afraid of forgetting; and Fanny promiſed, the moment ſhe had dined, to ſtep to her ſiſter, and prepare her for the reception of her gueſt.

This buſineſs being adjuſted ſo much to her ſatisfaction, the heart of our heroine was lightened of an intolerable burthen: her countenance cleared up, and ſhe did not ſo much reflect on the friendleſs and unſupported ſtate into which ſhe was again going to be thrown, as her eſcape from certain ruin, and ſhe really felt more pleaſure in the idea of ridding herſelf of a man whom ſhe feared ſhe could never love,

than diſappointment at the cloſing of her dazzling proſpects of rank and grandeur.

But to a mind unuſed to diſguiſe its ſentiments, the taſk of impoſing on her vile deceivers, and by the eaſe of her manner leave them unſuſpicious of her having detected their machinations, appeared an almoſt inſuperable taſk: yet this it was neceſſary to perform.

Again ſhe roſe, new dreſſed herſelf, and Mrs. Dennis, when ſhe came up ſoon after dinner with new enquiries, was aſtoniſhed to perceive her amendment: with her ſhe walked down, and greatly ſurpriſed her lover by her preſence and recovery. The airing which had been talked of in the morning was again propoſed, to which Perſiana very readily conſented, as an amuſement which by dividing the attention of her perſecutors

perſecutors might enable her to perform her part with greater eaſe.

They went a few miles out of town on the weſtern road, ſtopped and drank tea in one of the villages, and returned early in the evening, leſt our heroine ſhould be fatigued. Their way lay paſt the jewellers whom Lord Normanton had employed: he ſtopped to enquire whether the jewels he had ordered were finiſhed, and finding they were, took them, encloſed in a little ſhagreen box, into the carriage, and preſented them with great grace to Perſiana, who endeavoured to receive them with an appearance of pleaſure and gratitude, and, on his deſiring her ſo to do, put them into her pocket.

When they alighted, they found a cold collation ready on the table for them, which Mrs. Dennis had ordered becauſe

becauſe Perſiana had ate no dinner: an attention for which ſhe received the thanks of Lord Normanton, and they immediately ſat down to it.

Soon after ſupper was over, his Lordſhip roſe, and entreating that our heroine would not fatigue herſelf with ſitting up late, he drew a large purſe from his pocket, well filled with gold, and preſſed her ſo much to accept it for any little matters for which ſhe might have occaſion, that ſhe could not reſiſt his importunities without diſcovering the ſentiments ſhe was ſo intereſted to conceal: he then took his leave of her in a very tender manner, and departed.

As ſoon as the coach was driven from the door, and Mrs. Dennis's footman retired to his fellow ſervants in the kitchen—"I will take his Lordſhip's

Lordſhip's advice," ſaid Perſiana; "and with your leave, Madam, will ring for a candle and go to bed, as my head is ſtill very heavy.

She did ſo. Fanny came. Perſiana took her leave of Mrs. Dennis, and the parlour door was ſhut. She looked eagerly towards the houſe door, and with ſatisfaction ſaw it open. She ſmilingly kiſſed her hand, by way of good night to Fanny, and out ſhe tripped.

Fanny marched very gravely up ſtairs with the candle into Perſiana's apartment, and having ſtaid a proper time to have it ſuppoſed ſhe aſſiſted in undreſſing her, ſhe went again into the kitchen, and did not ſpend there a leſs chearful evening from the conſciouſneſs of the treaſure ſhe carried in her pocket.

In

In the morning the intended bridegroom appeared very early at the houſe of Mrs. Dennis, accompanied by a perſon in canonicals: for it was intended the ceremony ſhould be performed early, and that they ſhould afterwards take a drive into the country, ſpend the day at ſome inn, and return in the evening; and Mrs. Dennis went up ſtairs to awake the bride and aſſiſt in dreſſing her.

She threw the bed curtains open, exclaiming at her unaccuſtomed indolence; but her gaiety received conſiderable check on obſerving not only that the ſnowy pillow was at preſent unpreſſed by the deſtined victim, but that it bore no marks of recent preſſure.

"She has not been in bed to-night," ſhe cried. She ran to the cloſet: no Miſs Melcombe there. "Aſtoniſhing!

ing! what can all this mean?" The bell was rung with fury: Fanny appeared, pale, trembling, and apprehenſive of the approaching ſtorm.

"Where is Miſs Melcombe, girl?"

"In bed, Madam."

"In bed! no, nor has ſhe been in bed to-night. This is the moſt unaccountable thing I ever knew: ſearch the houſe; enquire who have ſeen her."

She ran down to impart the unwelcome intelligence to Lord Normanton: his Lordſhip, ſufficiently alarmed, aſſiſted her to ſearch in every room in the houſe, but to no purpoſe. It was plain ſhe was gone; but whither? and what could be her inducement for ſo wild a flight?

"The gold and jewels that you gave her to be ſure," ſaid Mrs. Dennis: "ſhe is gone off with *them*."

"Her

"Her ſoul is above it!" cried his Lordſhip in great indignation: "beſide were they not her's by gift? did ſhe not expect the enjoyment of them, and every other appendage of rank and wealth? She muſt by ſome means have diſcovered our plot, and has fled to eſcape it. You have truſted ſome of your ſervants?"

"No, on my honour."

"*Honour!*" repeated his Lordſhip with a ſneer. "What ſervant has particularly attended her?"

"None but my new ſervant Fanny, who has lived here too ſhort a time to be able to tell any tales."

"Call her."

Fanny very reluctantly made her appearance. The poor girl was gentle and good humoured; but her mind poſſeſſed no great firmneſs, and by the joint

joint effects of threats and promiſes they were ſoon acquainted in a very minute manner with all ſhe knew, accompanied with the warmeſt proteſtations that ſhe thought no ill, but wiſhed to ſave the ſweeteſt young lady in the world from ruin.

A little relieved from his alarm at perceiving he might ſo eaſily again have our heroine in his power, not queſtioning but the mantuamaker was made of as yielding materials as her ſiſter, and perfectly well acquainted with the irreſiſtible quality of all powerful gold, the good humour of Lord Normanton partly returned; he condeſcended to aſſure Fanny of the *honourableneſs* of his intentions, and that Miſs Melcombe muſt certainly have *miſunderſtood* him: he promiſed her mountains of riches if ſhe would aſſiſt

in

in bringing her back; and not chuſing to truſt any one to talk to the mantua-maker but himſelf, he ſat out immediately for her houſe, taking Fanny as his guide and introducer: on which expedition we will beg leave to drop his Lordſhip, and attend our heroine, whom we have unwillingly quitted in her evening excurſion to narrate the above particulars.

CHAPTER XIII.

Ah fear! ah frantic fear!
I ſee, I ſee thee near!
I know thy hurried ſtep, thy haggard eye!
Like thee I ſtart, like thee diſorder'd fly.

MALLET.

WHEN the door cloſed after Perſiana, and ſhe found herſelf alone in the ſtreets of London, where ſhe had ſcarcely ever walked before, and then never without a conductor, ſhe felt a momentary alarm; but being perfectly confident that ſhe exactly remembered Fanny's directions to the ſtreet and the houſe of her ſiſter, it as inſtantly ſubſided; and congratulating herſelf on having with ſo much eaſe eſcaped

out of the houſe, ſhe walked forward with light ſpirits and agile ſteps.

She had nearly reached the end of the ſecond ſtreet, when ſhe found the paſſage to the third obſtructed by an overturned coach, and a mob of people gathered about it. This was a vexatious circumſtance; ſhe was afraid of turning into any other ſtreet leaſt ſhe ſhould miſtake her way, and unwilling to ſtand ſtill where ſhe was till the mob was diſperſed: ſhe had however no other recourſe than the latter, and ſtood cloſe up to the door of a houſe for the greater ſafety. She had ſcarcely placed herſelf there leaning againſt it, when by it's being ſuddenly opened ſhe fell down into the paſſage. The maſter of the houſe had heard a noiſe in the ſtreet and was coming out to ſee what was the matter.

matter. Stupid and brutal, he roughly lifted our heroine up, and demanded what ſhe did there. She told him. He was determined not to believe her, inſiſted that her intention was to rob his houſe, and called to his apprentice to run for a conſtable.

In vain our heroine proteſted her innocence, and begged to be releaſed from his rough gripe; he reiterated his orders for a conſtable, and the apprentice went off in ſearch of one: but before he returned, the wife came to the door: her huſband told her what had happened, and Perſiana again proteſted her innocence. The good woman happened to be a more reaſonable being than the man, and at her requeſt our heroine was releaſed.

But alarmed and confuſed by this incident, her preſence of mind was

gone. The end of the ſtreet was ſtill occupied by a great number of people: for it ſeems a gentleman in the coach had broken his leg in the overturn, and waited for a proper conveyance to his own houſe. Afraid to puſh through the croud, dreading to ſtay in the ſtreet, for ſhe obſerved the man and his wife at the door watching her movements, and could not tell but they might put her into the hands of the conſtable, when the apprentice returned with him, if ſhe was found loitering about, ſhe walked into another ſtreet, and bearing from that to the ſame hand which led to the one to which ſhe was going, flattered herſelf it would bring her by another turning back into it.

But in this ſhe found herſelf miſtaken; ſhe ſtill however wandered on,

loſt

loſt in a labyrinth of ſtreets and allies: the night grew dark, the multitude which had filled the ſtreet were diſperſed, and only a few wretched women remained, condemned to prey on thoſe vices which had undone them.

Now and then a coach rattled paſt her, and ſhe aſſumed ſufficient courage to call to the coachmen, but found them all engaged. A paſtry cook's ſhop happened to be open at this unuſual time of night; ſhe went into it to requeſt the being directed to the ſtreet ſhe had miſſed; but the maſter, half drunk, gave her abuſive language, and bade her go into the tayerns and enquire.

Almoſt fainting with fatigue and terror, ſhe turned from the door, and met at it a young woman faſhionably dreſſed, as ſhe perceived by the light

from the lamp in the ſhop. From her own ſex ſhe aſſured herſelf of more humane treatment. "Will you be kind enough, Madam," ſaid ſhe, "to direct me the way to Jermyn-ſtreet?"

"Oh yes, my dear, with all my heart. But it is a great way from hence—are you going thither?"

"I am, Madam, if my feeble limbs will carry me ſo far."

"Lord child! you ſeem vaſtly tired: lean on my arm, I will walk with you."

This was a moſt acceptable propoſal to our poor heroine, who from wearineſs and hurry of ſpirits wanted very much both a ſupport and a guide: ſhe expreſſed her grateful ſenſe of this good natured offer, took hold of the lady's arm, and they walked forwards: but ſhe was ſo enfeebled by extreme fatigue,

fatigue, and the perturbations of her mind, that her companion could ſcarcely drag her along through two or three ſtreets: when paſſing a noted tavern, the lady ſtopped; "you are ſo faint, child," ſaid ſhe, "I think it is quite neceſſary you ſhould have a glaſs of wine to revive your ſpirits."

"Oh, Madam, not for the world."

"Poh! what I ſuppoſe you have got no money; but never mind, we ſhall find ſomebody to treat us, never fear. I am very well known here;" and in ſhe dragged her without the leaſt regarding her objections, or giving way to her endeavours to draw her arm from the preſſure of her's. Indeed aſtoniſhment and horror at perceiving what perſon ſhe was with, enabled our diſtreſſed heroine to give very little force to either; but diveſted

of the little remainder of her ſtrength, ſhe ſunk into a ſwoon the moment ſhe entered the houſe.

Whilſt the people who happened to be in the way were endeavouring to recover her, two gentlemen, coming down ſtairs, and ſeeing a buſtle, ſtopped; one of them was acquainted with the companion of Perſiana—"Ah my little Louiſa!" ſaid he, "are you there? what is the matter, child?"

"A friend of mine a little fatigued with a long walk. Don't you think her handſome?"

"An angel, on my honour!" exclaimed one of the gentlemen.

"It is ſhe, Freeman," ſaid the other, "the *very* girl I was deſcribing to you. Amazing! ſo *ſoon* come to this!"

By

By this time Perſiana, who had been made to ſwallow a little cordial, opened her eyes, and fixed them on Captain Thomſon, who ſtood gazing on her not able to credit the teſtimony of his ſenſes. She looked round: the place, the company, the opinion he muſt neceſſarily entertain of her, ruſhed with impetuoſity on her imagination, and overwhelmed her with confuſion.

She aroſe, though trembling ſo much ſhe could ſcarcely ſtand, and turning to her companion—"I thank you, Madam," ſaid ſhe, "for your humane care of a *ſtranger*, and I wiſh you good night."

"What mean you, my dear?" returned the other: "we will not part ſo; here are two of us, and there are two gentlemen; I am ſure they will give

give us a ſupper. What ſay you, gentlemen?"

"With tranſport," cried Captain Thomſon, eagerly ſnatching the hand of Perſiana, "you ſhall name your bill of fare."

"Unhand me, Sir. You know me not—you *miſtake* me," ſaid ſhe, her eyes ſwelling with indignant tears, "for what I am *not*."

"My angel!" ſaid he, "your charms want not the heightening of affected coyneſs."

"For heaven's ſake let me go Sir."

Anger gave her ſtrength. She ſuddenly ſnatched her hand from him, and darting like an arrow out of the door, flew down the ſtreet. He ran after her; but in that moment a croud pouring out of a place of evening entertainment,

tertainment, involved her in it, and ſhe was loſt to him.

For a few minutes ſhe walked in it in an agony of diſtreſs, uncertain which way to direct her ſteps, and dreading that on the decreaſe of the croud, which leſſened every moment, he would again find her, ſhe turned down an alley, and from thence into another ſtreet. But ſtill the idea of his purſuit tormented her; ſhe heard ſome haſty ſteps behind; ſhe ran forward; ſhe ſaw lights in a church, and perceived there was a funeral; ſhe ran in with as little noiſe as poſſible, and going into the darkeſt part of it, unperceived by any one, ſhe entered a pew; where, overcome by a variety of excruciating ſenſations, ſhe fainted away.

CHAPTER XIV.

Thus was I boſom'd in the peaceful grave,
My placid ghoſt no longer wept it's doom,
When ſavage robbers every ſanction brave,
And with outrageous guilt defraud the tomb.
SHENSTONE.

WHEN Perſiana awoke from her ſwoon ſhe found herſelf lying on the cold and damp pavement, but was ſeveral minutes ere ſhe could recollect *where* ſhe was, or *how* ſhe came there. At laſt her memory brought in review the incidents of the preceding day and evening. Her education had been much too rational, and her underſtanding was much too good, to ſuffer the fear of ghoſts and apparitions to diſturb

turb her imagination in the place ſhe was in: yet the deep darkneſs, the ſolemn ſilence which reigned around her, connected with the idea of it's being the repoſitory of ſo many dead bodies, and that ſhe was locked up in it apart from every living creature operated upon her weakened nerves, and produced ſenſations of affright and horror which ſhe had never till that moment experienced, and which her reaſon at the ſame time condemned, and ſtruggled but in vain to diſſipate.

She ſtood up, and with ſharpened eye endeavoured to pierce through the darkneſs, and ſurvey the objects round; but as there was no moon, the twilight, which is never off the ſky at that time of year, was too feeble to give much light through a window rendered doubly

doubly obſcure by the colour of it's glaſs, and the duſt with which it was covered; it juſt enabled her confuſedly to diſcern a number of indiſtinct things. A new erected monument againſt one of the walls, which being of white marble was the moſt conſpicuous object, ſtruck her ſight: ſhe thought it looked like a woman: her diſturbed imagination made her think it was coming towards her, and ſhe ſunk down into the bottom of the pew in terror: ſhe heard a whiſking noiſe, and every moment expected to ſee the phantom.

All was again ſilence: again ſhe fearfully raiſed herſelf; but what were her feelings when a very little way from her ſhe ſaw a pair of flaming eyes? ſhe ſat down almoſt breathleſs, with palpitating heart, and trembling limbs.

She

She heard the noiſe again, which encreaſed with horrid ſcratchings, and ſeemed to be coming nearer: ſhe looked up—heavens! the eyes which ſhone like two ſtars were upon the top of the pew before her.

She gave herſelf over for loſt when a pitiful mewing diſcovered the object of her fright, and made her inclined to laugh at the ridiculouſneſs of her own fears. She called the cat to her, who purred round her, and ſeemed almoſt as pleaſed as herſelf at having found a companion.

She careſſed her new acquaintance; her mind grew compoſed; her ſpirits returned; when the unlocking a ſmall door in the church gave new alarm to the mind of our heroine; and to her great conſternation two men came in, one

one with a lanthorn in his hand, the other with a ſack on his ſhoulder.

They ſtopped ſhe perceived at the grave where the body had been depoſited the evening before; the lanthorn was ſet open that it might give the better light; they hoiſted up the coffin, opened it, and took out the body.

Amazed and ſhocked at the ſtrange, and, to her, unaccountable action, loſing all fears of diſcovery in her curioſity to ſee the event, Perſiana ſtood up upon a haſſock to obſerve them: her cat at that moment jumping down was heard by the two men, they turned their eyes that way, and ſaw the figure of a woman in white; their conſcience took the alarm: they thought it the ghoſt of the deceaſed coming to revenge the intended indignity to her remains; they dropped the corpſe, which

which they were preparing to put in the ſack, and leaving their lanthorn by the ſide of the grave, ran with all expedition out of the church, without once looking behind them.

Relieved by their abſence, our heroine puzzled herſelf in vain to diſcover what could induce theſe men to violate the rights of ſepulture; ſhe knew not that there are a ſet of wretches called *reſurrection* men, who, frequently in fee with the ſextons, and ſometimes without, make it their horrid buſineſs to rob the recent graves, and ſell the dead bodies to the ſurgeons of the different hoſpitals for their anatomical experiments.

Unacquainted with this ſhameful practice, ſhe formed a thouſand improbable conjectures. The lanthorn ſtood ſo as the full light of the candle

was thrown upon the corpſe, and ſhe fancied by the dreſs of the head it was a woman. "Some lover," ſaid ſhe, "perhaps deſirous of pouring his tears over the delight of his ſoul, and intending to embalm the precious remains. I will approach it: it muſt be an awful ſight; but fooliſhly and groundleſsly as I have been frightened this night, I cannot ſure fear to view an object which could not preſerve itſelf from injury."

She gazed on it with fixed attention as it lay in the diſmal habiliments of the grave; the covering of the face had fallen off, and preſented to view a countenance beautiful even in death.

"Alas!" ſaid ſhe, "what a fair flower is here cropped by the unſparing hand of death, ere time had withered it on it's ſtalk! Theſe features had

many

many admirers; *many* hearts were ſubdued by charms like theſe. Perhaps abounding in riches, bedecked with jewels, high in rank, this poor pale piece of inanimate clay lately glittered the foremoſt in the gay throng, the boaſt of her friends, the envy of the world: now—what a leſſon is this on the vanity of all earthly purſuits! of what avail *now* thy beauty, thy riches, thy birth? wert thou virtuous, modeſt, charitable? did *theſe* jewels adorn thee? they will form a crown of everlaſting ſplendour, and all beſides are droſs."

CHAPTER XV.

—— The various lot of life,
Oft from external circumſtance aſſumes
A moment's diſpoſition to rejoice
In thoſe delights, which at a different hour
Would paſs unheeded.

AKENSIDE.

THE day was now dawning, and brought with it a load of cares on the mind of our heroine. In what manner was ſhe to conduct herſelf? ſhould ſhe ſeek out Fanny's ſiſter, or ſhould ſhe take lodgings in ſome obſcure part of the town? She found herſelf inclined to the latter, for the mantuamaker lived much too near Mrs. Dennis not to hazard a diſcovery, nor could ſhe have

have an abſolute dependance either on Fanny's firmneſs or fidelity. Alas! that the more we advance in the knowledge of the world the more we ſhould find ſuſpicion keeping an equal pace with it, and experience juſtify it's growing cautions.

As ſoon as ſhe began to hear the morning cries, Perſiana walked cautiouſly out of the church at the door which the men had left unlocked. Entirely ignorant of what quarter of the town ſhe was in, ſhe walked leiſurely forwards for ſome time, till perceiving ſhe was come to St. Paul's church, ſhe was ſatisfied of her diſtance from her perſecutor's: ſhe went thro' many narrow ſtreets in the middle of the city, and ſtopped at a mean looking houſe, where ſhe perceived a bill for letting lodgings over the door.

She entered the little ſhop, which ſhe found was an haberdaſhers in a very humble way; and addreſſing a neat looking elderly woman, who ſat behind the counter, requeſted to ſee the lodgings which ſhe had to diſpoſe of.

The woman eyed her with ſome ſurpriſe, as if ſhe thought the deſire was inconſiſtent with her appearance; but roſe and with great civility ſhewed her to the apartment, which was either bed chamber or dining room at the good pleaſure of it's occupier, for the bed turned backward, and ſhut up by a pair of folding doors like a wardrobe. The furniture, though ordinary, was very clean; the rent was not high; pecuniary matters were ſoon ſettled; and Perſiana, making a decent excuſe for her immediate entrance, took inſtant

ſtant poſſeſſion, and requeſted her new landlady to procure her ſome breakfaſt, which when ſhe had finiſhed ſhe threw herſelf upon the bed, and by a ſleep till noon made herſelf ſome amends for the fatigue of the preceding night.

When ſhe aroſe from her humble pillow, "how regardleſs," ſaid ſhe, "are we of the *common* bleſſings of life becauſe they *are* common; we do not diſcern half their comforts till a privation of them points them out. Did I ever think, till laſt night, of the luxury of laying in a bed in preference to the cold pavement? or the joys which the ſhelter of a roof afforded? —'the *houſeleſs* child of want,' ſays Goldſmith—what an emphatic expreſſion! May my own experience teach me to compaſſionate ſuch, if Provi-

dence ever puts it in my power to relieve them!"

Some reflections which naturally ſucceeded theſe, made her ſtart as out of a dream; for they brought to her remembrance that in the hurry of her flight ſhe had left behind her the precious caſket which contained the reliques of her unfortunate mother; and the knowledge gave her unutterable pain. On them ſhe had depended for elucidating the ſtory of her birth, and their loſs ſhe looked upon as conſigning her to penury and oblivion for life. She wrung her hands in agony: ſhe poured out the tear of bitter anguiſh, and her heart ſuggeſted that this was the firſt hour of real misfortune.

Fatigued at length with unavailing tears and complaints, ſhe ſuffered reaſon

ſon by degrees to reaſſume the throne, and naturally fell upon plans for her future conduct. She unloaded her pockets of their *unneceſſary* burthen of gold and jewels. "Theſe ſplendid baubles," ſaid ſhe, "belong not to me: this gold is none of mine; both of them, intended as the purchaſe of my honour, ſhall, if I ever find opportunity, be returned to their infamous preſenter. But *how* ſhall I ſubſiſt? no matter, I will ſtarve rather than eat the bread of diſhonour. Five guineas I had in my pocket when I came from——" She deeply ſighed. "Thoſe five guineas I have a juſt claim to: the others I will lay up till I can return them, I will open my ſituation in part to my landlady, and take her advice."

In

In purſuance of this reſolution ſhe made up the money which ſhe had in her purſe five guineas, and wrapping up the remainder of the gold and the jewels in ſome paper, ſhe put them into a cheſt of drawers which ſtood in the room, of which the woman of the houſe had given her the key, and locking them up went down to ſpeak to Mrs. Larkins, for that was the name of the woman.

She found her alone. "When you are perfectly at leiſure," ſaid Perſiana to her, "will you permit me, Madam, half an hour's converſation with you in my apartment?"

"With pleaſure, Madam," anſwered Mrs. Larkins, "I will attend you, if the evening will be convenient; as I am obliged, till *that* time, to keep in my ſhop."

In

"In the interim, Madam, will you have the goodneſs to tell me how I am to procure myſelf ſome dinner? 'tis a little of the lateſt, I believe," added ſhe, ſmiling, "but I have been ſo much engaged I did not, till now, think of eating."

A little girl, whom Mrs. Larkins kept as ſervant, was diſpatched to the cook's ſhop on that errand; and in the evening the good woman herſelf, as ſhe had promiſed, attended our heroine, who received her with all that affability and politeneſs natural to her.

Mrs. Larkins, though never in high life, had yet ſeen better days, had lived in much more affluence than at preſent ſhe enjoyed; and, though not a woman of education, had an uncommon ſhare of underſtanding and penetration. A young woman, in the very

very elegant ſtyle of dreſs in which Perſiana appeared; with a dignity of air, and grace of manner, that diſtinguiſhed her above the dreſt miſſes of this very dreſſy age; ſeeking obſcure lodgings; entering upon them immediately, without a ſingle bundle of clothes to take up her time in depoſiting properly, engaged from morning till near evening ſo entirely as not to think of eating!

What was a woman who had *ſeen ſomething of the world*, which is a phraſe equivalent to being very ſuſpicious, to think of all this? Yet the ſuſpicion which theſe appearances raiſed was checked by the countenance of our heroine. It was not that ſhe was handſome; for Mrs. Larkins thought it poſſible, though Lavater does not, that a very vicious perſon

perſon might be a very beautiful one; yet Mrs. Larkins was a phyſiognomiſt alſo, and that determined her opinion: it was not ſo much the harmony of *feature*, for I believe no woman loves another the *better* for being handſome, but it was the harmony of *ſoul* which ſhone through them; it was the fine caſt of countenance, the *general* expreſſion, which prejudiced this good woman ſo much in her favour.

When ſhe was ſeated, "I fear Madam," ſaid Perſiana, "what I am going to ſay will give you but a bad opinion of me; but let me beſpeak your favourable judgment till time has convinced you I deſerve it. This purſe, Madam, 'tis a very lank one, contains all my earthly riches, and my wardrobe is all on my back: I have no friend

friend in the world to assist me either with money or advice—I am a poor forlorn wretch, Madam:" Her eyes filled—she paused a moment—" but that's no matter," said she, smiling through her tears, " I will not trouble you with complaint, but I have great need of your counsel. Think not, because I am poor, that I meanly flatter, but permit me to say, that there is so much good sense, so much benevolence in your countenance, that I assure myself I shall find you both able and willing to instruct me how I shall support myself by honest industry. My education has not been neglected; I can do plain work very well, and am mistress of all the fine ones: will you have the goodness to inform me, Madam, how I can make these acquirements *useful?*—put me,

in

in ſhort, into ſome method of *getting my bread?*—but it muſt be in a way which will not require my appearance, for it greatly behoves me not to be ſeen—and will you direct me how I may get cheap clothes, ſuch as will ſuit my preſent ſtation?"

More matter for ſuſpicion! yet I believe moſt people have that complaiſance for their firſt opinions that they are not eaſily induced to give them up: beſides the ſweetneſs, the modeſty, the unaffected pathos of real diſtreſs, which played over her fine features, which ſpoke in the melodious voice of our heroine, made its application ſo forcibly to the heart of Mrs. Larkin, who had herſelf known affliction, as repreſſed every ſentiment of diſtruſt, and left it open to the impreſſions

impreſſions of tenderneſs and humanity.

She promiſed every thing in her power; and, as a proof of her ſincerity, immediately went to a perſon with whom ſhe was acquainted at the court end of the town, who was in a very capital way of buſineſs, and procured for her lodger a gentleman's waiſtcoat to embroider by way of trial.

Perſiana with great ſatisfaction ſat about it the next morning, and, as ſhe worked uncommonly quick, it was ſoon finiſhed, and returned by Mrs. Larkin; who heard with good-natured pleaſure the praiſes that were due to the beauty and taſte of the work; and ſhe returned with a handſome gratuity, another waiſtcoat, and promiſe of conſtant employment.

The

The fears of want being thus chaſed from the mind of Perſiana, her ſpirits returned, for ſhe was naturally of a cheerful diſpoſition, and ſhe and Mrs. Larkin lived very comfortably together for ſome weeks; when ſuddenly the behaviour of that good woman took a very diſagreeable and unaccountable turn; ſhe always found ſome excuſe for not ſpending the evenings in the apartment of Perſiana, which ſhe was always very kindly invited to do; grew very remiſs in thoſe little ceremonious inſtances of reſpect which ſhe had before never omitted; and of which people, who have been thrown below their ſtation, are inclined with a jealous punctuality to exact; and a gloomy reſerve, bordering on rudeneſs, took place of her

good humoured civility, and natural loquacity.

Though by no means captious, our heroine had too much ſpirit to paſs over palpable rudeneſs without notice. "What is the reaſon, Madam," ſaid ſhe to her one day, "that your manner is ſo changed towards me? have I in any way offended you? if I have been ſo unfortunate, believe me it was purely *unintentional*; for as I never felt for you any other ſenſations than eſteem and love, I never could *knowingly* deport myſelf contrary to thoſe ſentiments."

Mrs. Larkins gave her a piercing look. "Does your conſcience, Madam, aſſure you that you *really* deſerve the reſpect of an *honeſt* perſon?"

"Yes," ſaid Perſiana, colouring with indignation at the manner in which

which ſhe ſpoke. "I thank God it pronounces no one action of my life unworthy of it."

"I am glad to hear it," ſaid the other with a ſarcaſtic ſneer, miſinterpreting her bluſh into conſcious guilt; "then perhaps this advertiſement was meant not to deſcribe *you* but ſome *other* perſon," pulling a newſpaper out of her pocket, and pointing with her finger to the place as ſhe gave it into Perſiana's hand, and our aſtoniſhed heroine read as follows—

"Whereas on the night of the 19th of July, an unfortunate young woman eloped from a gentleman with whom ſhe had lived ſome time, taking with her a large ſum of money, and jewels of great value; this is to give notice, that if ſhe will immediately return, all miſdemeanors ſhall be buried

in oblivion, the gentleman ſtill preſerves his affection for her, and is ready to fulfil his engagements: but if ſhe does not think proper ſo to do, he promiſes a reward of five hundred pounds to any one who will ſecure her in the hands of juſtice, ſo as ſhe may be convicted of the above robbery; and all perſons to whom the jewels are offered to be pawned or ſold are required to ſtop them." Then followed ſuch a deſcription of the jewels, and ſo very particular an one of her perſon and dreſs, that it was impoſſible not to point her out.

With a face glowing, and a heart almoſt burſting with indignation, Perſiana read this diabolical advertiſement, and when ſhe had done, laid the paper in her lap gaſping for breath; Mrs. Larkins all the time eyeing her with

with the moſt piercing look of curioſity.

"Why this," ſaid ſhe at laſt, "goes beyond every idea I had formed of malice and wicked deceit. Heaven and earth!—but I *will* be calm.—I no longer wonder, Mrs. Larkins, at your behaviour. Oh! what muſt you have thought of me! I *am*, Madam, the perſon deſcribed: I acknowledge myſelf ſuch—nay more, I even committed the *robbery*, as it is called; for ſee," ſaid ſhe, running eagerly to her drawers and taking them out, "here is the gold, and here the jewels deſcribed; yet had I meant to have appropriated them to my own uſe, there would have been no neceſſity for working for my bread. Now, Mrs. Larkins, you ſee I have put myſelf compleatly in your power, and you may if

you pleaſe make five hundred pounds of your lodger."

"This is a very myſterious affair," ſaid ſhe with an air of perplexity.

"It is: yet that I may not be wanting to myſelf, and that I may ſecure the good opinion of *one* perſon in the world, if you will have the patience to hear me I will unravel it."

Nothing could be more acceptable to the perſon to whom it was made than this propoſal, and Perſiana narrated to her every incident of her life without reſerve.

The tender and benevolent ſoul of Mrs. Larkins was deeply touched at this recital. She ſhed a plentiful ſhower of tears over the friendleſs, unfortunate, and perſecuted orphan, and made amends, by the energetic plaudits

dits of ſincerity, for the injuſtice of her ſuſpicions.

A council was next held on the preſent exigency of affairs, wherein it was agreed, that though in Mrs. Larkins's houſe our heroine might be entirely private, yet ſhe muſt be obliged to keep exceedingly cloſe, for that five hundred pounds was a very tempting ſum, and would ſharpen the eye of intereſt in purſuit of her: but as this extreme cloſeneſs would be both diſagreeable, and prejudicial to her health, it was further determined, that as Mrs. Larkins had a widow ſiſter, a very good woman, who rented a farm in Yorkſhire, Perſiana ſhould go to her for a time, for Mrs. Larkins had no doubt but ſhe could, from her repreſentation, ſecure her a very chearful reception; and if ſhe found

the country agreeable, Mrs. Ford could procure her a place among the neighbouring gentry, by whom ſhe was greatly reſpected.

This plan pleaſed our heroine exceedingly: ſhe deteſted the town, and longed to get out of it. Very little preparation was requiſite for her journey; ſhe thought it neceſſary, however, that Mrs. Larkins ſhould write to her ſiſter and receive her anſwer before ſhe ſat out; and in the preſent warmth of her temper, ſhe wrote a letter to Lord Normanton, returning him the money and jewels, upbraiding the baſeneſs of his conduct, and inſiſting upon a return of her caſket, which was to be put into the hands of Mrs. Larkins, who undertook to deliver her letter, &c. as ſoon as ſhe was got out of the reach of his machinations; and the

idea

idea of regaining her caſket was the higheſt cordial ſhe could at this time have received.

Mrs. Ford's anſwer was not deferred a ſingle poſt; ſhe gave our heroine a very warm and preſſing invitation, promiſed to make her reſidence in her *own* family as agreeable as poſſible, as long as ſhe choſe to remain there; and, if ſhe wiſhed it, made no doubt of procuring for her an eligible ſituation in the neighbourhood.

This letter, ſo conſonant to her wiſhes, gave Perſiana a pleaſure ſhe had not before for ſome time felt, and determined her to begin her journey immediately. After buying thoſe cloaths and linnen which were abſolutely neceſſary, and paying for her lodging, ſhe perceived that ſhe ſhould have barely enough money left to pay the

the expences of her journey: but this gave her no uneaſineſs, as at Mrs. Ford's ſhe ſhould not be in the way of incurring any expence, and by getting a place in a good family her future wants would be ſupplied; nor did ſhe inform Mrs. Larkins of the low ſtate of her finances, for ſhe knew the generoſity of her heart bore no proportion to her poſſeſſions, that ſhe had money but barely ſufficient to carry on her little buſineſs, and that to take any from it would involve her in difficulties. Her wardrobe was packed in a ſmall portmanteau, and ſhe ſat out early one morning in the Leeds coach, Mrs. Ford living within two miles of that town.

CHAPTER XVI.

On diſtant heaths, beneath autumnal ſkies,
Penſive I ſaw the circling ſhade deſcend;
Weary and faint I heard the ſtorm ariſe,
While the ſun vaniſh'd like a faithleſs friend.

No kind companion led my ſteps aright;
No friendly planet lent it's glimm'ring ray;
E'en the lone cot refus'd it's wonted light,
Where toil in peaceful ſlumber clos'd the day.

SHENSTONE.

PERSIANA had equipped herſelf for her journey in a dreſs by which ſhe could not poſſibly be recognized by any of her former acquaintance: her face was entirely hidden in a large cloſe cap, and overſhadowed by a great ſtraw hat; a common linen gown

gown and coarſe apron gave no very high ideas of her quality; and her elegant form was effectually concealed in a large wrapping black cloak.

I ſhall not trouble my reader with the common occurrences of the journey. By ſome delay in the coachman, the coach did not arrive at it's inn till near duſk, and our heroine had the mortification to find, that when ſhe had paid her fare, ſhe had but *one* ſhilling remaining in her purſe. Willing to ſpare that, ſhe would not hire any conveyance to Mrs. Ford's, to whoſe houſe upon enquiring ſhe found it would be very eaſy to walk, and that it was in ſo direct a path it was not poſſible to miſs it; ſhe gave her portmanteau into the care of the hoſtler, whom the coachman recommended to her as an *honeſt* fellow, and who

who promiſed to put it into a very ſafe place till the morning, when ſhe meant to ſend one of Mrs. Ford's ſervants for it, and ſhe ſat out by herſelf for the farm.

Though ſhe was exceedingly fatigued by this long and tireſome journey in a crouded and uneaſy coach, yet the idea of being freed from the machinations of Lord Normanton, and the cordial reception ſhe was likely to experience from the ſiſter of the benevolent Larkins, animated her weary limbs, and enabled her to purſue her walk: though it was in ſo ſlow a manner that it was dark ere ſhe reached the farm yard.

The barking of the houſe dogs a little terrified her; but ſhe made her way ſafely paſt them and knocked at the door, which was opened by a country

country wench. Perſiana enquired if Mrs. Ford was at home, but was anſwered by a broad ſtare and "anan?" She repeated the queſtion, and received an anſwer in the broad dialect of that county, as unintelligible to her as if it had been in high Dutch.

A ſhrill voice in a tone of vulgar impatience now called to know what was the matter; and Perſiana advanced forwards into the kitchen, where ſat a healthy looking young woman in deep mourning, and very near her a ſmartiſh looking young man.

"I preſume, Madam," ſaid ſhe, "Mrs. Ford lives here; is ſhe at home?" A violent and clamorous effuſion of grief was the conſequence of this enquiry. Oh her dear aunt!—whom ſhe ſhould ever *bitterly* lament!—how *cruel* it was to remind her of her

her ſorrows!—did ſhe not know ſhe was dead?"

"Dead!" repeated Perſiana, almoſt ready to give up the ghoſt herſelf at the intelligence, "dead! oh I hope I miſtook the word!"

"Indeed but you did not though, for ſhe was buried but yeſterday. She died very ſuddenly indeed, for ſhe dropped down in a fit of *parplexy* juſt as ſhe was going to ſupper. I had been at uncle Green's for a month, and they ſent for me: for to be ſure the houſe was in a ſad confuſion, and ſhe left me all ſhe had in the world. Poor dear woman! oh I can never cry enough at her loſs!" Again ſhe blubbered in a moſt violent way, whilſt the ſtill and ſilent tear of ſorrow ſtole down the cheek of our heroine. "I am ſorry indeed, Madam," ſaid ſhe,

ſhe, " for your loſs; and it is no ſmall affliction to myſelf, for I have taken a long journey on purpoſe to ſee her."

" A long journey!"

" Yes from London, Madam. I was ſet down by the ſtage coach this evening at Leeds."

" Well that is very unlucky: I have but one ſpare bed, and that this gentleman ſhall have. But who *are* you pray? I did not know my poor aunt had any acquaintance in London but my aunt Larkins."

" It was from Mrs. Larkins I came; ſhe wrote——"

" And pray what buſineſs had *ſhe* to ſend any body here? She and her tribe ate my poor aunt up alive as long as ſhe lived; but *I'll* take care of what is left. You can't think, Mr. Groves, what

what a friend my poor aunt have been to ſhe; pounds and pounds every year uſed to go: there is nobody knows what I am the worſe for her: I might have been a great deal better fortin: and now ſhe ſends her trumpery down for me to maintain. But no I thank her, I know better than that."

"I am very much fatigued with my journey, Madam; you will have the goodneſs to let me reſt here *one* night?"

"I tell you I have no ſpare bed."

"But my dear Miſs Dawſon," ſaid the young man, who was a broken manufacturer's ſon, and valued himſelf very much upon his ſagacity, "how do you know, ſuppoſing that you *were* inclined to relieve her, how will you know that ſhe *actually* came from

Mrs. Larkins? Have you a letter of credit, child?"

"I have not, Sir. Mrs. Larkins wrote to Mrs. Ford and——"

"And pray what is your name, if a body may aſk?"

"Merfille. No, I beg your pardon, I do not know what I was thinking about—it is Mandeville."

"I thought ſo—I thought ſo," he cried, burſting into an inſulting laugh, rubbing his hands, and enjoying his own wiſdom—"I am ſeldom miſtaken. Well this is the beſt thing I ever heard! ſhe does not know her own name! excellent a faith! And ſo Miſs Merfille, alias Mandeville, alias pickpocket, you may troop, for I am ſure Miſs Dawſon will not keep company with ladies that do not know their own name."

"Out

"Out of my houſe you vile cheat," ſcreamed Miſs Dawſon, "and Nell go with the lady and ſee that ſhe do not loiter in the yard."

Perſiana attempted not to remonſtrate; ſhe turned from them with the indignation they deſerved, and following the wench out, aſked her, when they came to the gate, to put her into the path which led to the town: the girl did ſo and left her.

Once more alone, our unfortunate orphan had leiſure to reflect on the peculiar cruelty of her deſtiny, and the tears which indignation had reſtrained now gave her full heart relief by a plentiful ſhower. She found her feeble and wearied limbs, after walking a very ſhort way, unable to ſupport her; and ſhe ſat herſelf down on the dewy graſs. The night was uncom-

monly dark, for the ſky was loaden with clouds, and the diſtant thunder gave notice of an approaching tempeſt; the air felt cloſe and oppreſſively hot, and conſpired with her melancholy thoughts to lower her ſpirits almoſt to deſpondence.

"Why do I ſtruggle," ſhe cried, "any longer with my fate? Heaven hath doomed me to deſtruction, and I will reſign myſelf to the inſcrutable diſpoſals of Providence. Here I will lay my weary limbs, and here ſhall they find eternal reſt, when yonder lightnings as they come near reduce them to aſhes. Why ſhould that thought give a pang to my heart? Looſed by the hand of heaven from a world that contains no joys for me, my glad ſpirit ſhall wing it's way beyond yon gloomy clouds, in ſearch of the

the bleſt forms of father, mother, friends. Oh rapturous meeting! In their bleſt ſociety, fearing no treachery, experiencing no inſults, I ſhall enjoy a felicity which knows no end."

The encreaſing wind quickly whirled up the clouds, every burſt of thunder proclaimed their nearer approach, till advanced, they ſeemed to pour all their fury on the head of Perſiana: the roarings of the thunder were beyond conception tremendous, the flaſhings of the lightning inceſſant, whilſt a ſtorm of mingled hail and rain deſcended in torrents on this "houſeleſs child of want," as ſhe laid on the wet earth in a deſperate kind of reſignation, regardleſs of the terrors which ſurrounded her, and inviting the ſtroke which ſhould end her ſorrows.

CHAPTER XVII.

——— Was this fine frame,
Nerves exquiſitively textur'd, ſoft deſires,
Aſpiring thoughts, this comprehenſive ſoul,
With all her train of god-like faculties,
Giv'n to be ſunk in this vile drudgery?

JEPHSON.

AT length the fury of the tempeſt ſubſided, the clouds blew over, and the riſing moon diſpelled the horrors of darkneſs. The unhappy Perſiana roſe from the wet earth, but could ſcarcely ſtand under the weight of her dripping cloaths. She proceeded ſlowly towards the town, which appeared by a profuſion of lights before her; at length ſhe reached it. It was late,

late, but the terrors of the tempeſt had kept moſt people from going to bed. She eaſily found her way to the inn where her portmanteau was left, but when ſhe went into the kitchen, and deſired to have a bed, her appearance was ſo very unprepoſſeſſing that the ſervants who were aſſembled there deſired her to walk out again, ſaying they lodged no travellers: in vain ſhe endeavoured to tell her tale; they would not hear her, but directed her to a little public houſe in the town, where, in the words of the chamber-maid, they took in ſuch kind of vermin. The inſolence of this lady to our poor, wet, and ſhivering heroine, was encreaſed by the importance of the office ſhe held: for ſhe was entruſted with the care of the houſe, whilſt her

maſter and miſtreſs were gone to a chriſtening out of the town.

Perſiana next deſired to ſee the hoſtler, who came to her half drunk, and when ſhe demanded her portmanteau, impudently inſiſted that he knew of no ſuch thing. The coachman was ſent for to corroborate the honeſty of his friend; they had neither of them the *leaſt* remembrance of any ſuch portmanteau. The hoſtler became vociferous at this impeachment of an integrity which had *never* before been called in queſtion, ſcolded, ſwore; the whole hoſt of ſervants joined in defence of their injured companion, and poor Perſiana was glad to get once more into the ſtreet with unbroken bones.

Behold her again wandering, diveſted of all earthly goods but one poor ſhilling; weary, wet, and hungry; in

in the ſtreets of a town where ſhe knew not a creature, at twelve o'clock at night, uncertain what to do with herſelf at preſent, and without any reſource for future ſubſiſtence.

She found all the houſes ſhut up by this time, and by the lights in the upper ſtories every body going to bed. She dragged her weary limbs along through ſeveral ſtreets, when going into a narrow one the noiſe of loud and unbounded mirth met her ear, which ſhe found proceeded from a little public houſe, and which was in fact the very one to which ſhe had been directed by the chamber maid.

There had been a fair at a neighbouring village that day, and a jovial party, conſiſting of the lame, the maimed, and the blind, beſides menders of china, manufacturers of plaiſter figures,

figures, rag merchants, &c. were met in this place, all flush of money, to spend it here; and as fortune had denied them *years* of affluence they determined to have a *night* of it.

A merrier group of faces Persiana had never before seen: they were sitting round a large table, gentlemen and ladies promiscuously, plenty of liquors of various sorts before them; talking, laughing, singing, hallowing; whilst a blind fiddler was scraping in a corner with all his might, to heighten the pleasure of their entertainment. The entrance of our heroine gave a momentary pause to their obstreperous joy; and seeing her wet and comfortless condition, they overwhelmed her with offers of service, and distressed her by their benevolence: the women all offered her cloaths, the men were for-

for pouring ſpirits down her throat to prevent her taking cold, and ſhe found it ſo difficult to reſiſt their clamorous good nature, that ſhe was conſtrained to ſip ſome brandy to get rid of their importunities; and indeed it was the moſt ſalutary thing which could have been given her, as in all probability it prevented the moſt fatal effects from the damp in which ſhe had been ſo long enveloped.

A little recovered from her extreme faintneſs by the power of this cordial, which, uncommon as it was to her, merely relieved her chillineſs without the leaſt affecting her head, a debate enſued about the beſt method of her accommodation: ſhe was ſo thoroughly wet, that a partial change of dreſs would be of no uſe, and ſhe wiſhed to go to bed: but of beds there were but a ſuf-

a ſufficiency for the gueſts already there. They were all men and their wives, except one young gingerbread ſeller, and he with great good nature inſiſted upon her taking part of his.

Perſiana had too much good ſenſe to reſent this offer, but declined it with much civility; and left the ladies by a freſh arrangement ſhould purpoſe her participating any of their's, requeſted very earneſtly of the landlady a little ſtraw in ſome cloſet by herſelf, alledging ſhe never could ſleep if any body laid in the ſame room; the woman conſidered that very likely her maid ſervant would not be able to go to bed that night, and propoſed putting a pair of clean ſheets on her's; this offer was received with joy: Perſiana took her leave of this joyous company with an affability and pleaſingneſs

neſs of manner that charmed them, and retired to the top of the houſe, the landlady promiſing to dry her things by the morning, and to ſend her up ſome ſupper.

The gueſts, whoſe ſupper had been ſubſtantial, had not ſo entirely cleared the diſhes but that there were many good fragments left, which were placed together in all their variety on a clean diſh and was carried up to our heroine; who, though ſhe thought it looked like a beggar's entertainment, picked out ſome pieces and eat them with a reliſh which the poignant ſauſe of hunger alone can give. Wearineſs alſo ſoftened her flock bed, ſmoothed the coarſe ſheets; and in ſpite of the vociferous mirth of the company, which was renewed with freſh vigour after ſhe left them, and the ſtings of a thou-

ſand

ſand fleas, in defiance of continual vexation, diſappointment, all the ills ſhe had ſuſtained, and all thoſe which ſhe had to apprehend, fatigue, youth, health, but above all a pure conſcience, procured her a ſweeter and more undiſturbed repoſe than comes often to the ſhare of the indolent occupier of a bed of down.

Perſiana did not awake till late the next morning, and when ſhe aroſe had the ſatisfaction to hear that the good company ſhe had met the preceding evening were gone from thence to another fair at ſome diſtance. I ſay ſatisfaction, for notwithſtanding ſhe had experienced infinite civilities from them, I believe ſhe very little cared for farther acquaintance, particularly with the young gingerbread ſeller. She ſat down to breakfaſt; but as ſhe

now

now wanted that ſauſe which had rendered her ſupper ſo ſavory, the coarſe Bohea tea and tough oaten cake were merely taſted, and ſhe roſe from it with as much appetite as ſhe ſat down.

What was to pay? was the next queſtion. Alas the bill was ſixpence more than our heroine's purſe afforded; and ſixpence the landlady told her was a *great* deal of money for people to loſe. She happened to have in her pocket, beſides a white cambrick handkerchief, a fine coloured one, which ſhe offered the woman, who took it as ſhe ſaid to *oblige* her. She enquired the great road to London, and no other plan occurring than to get there as ſoon and as well as ſhe could, ſhe took leave of her landlady, and bent her courſe that way.

The

The morning was fine, and the ſun ſhone with ſplendour; the birds chaunted with melody, all nature wore a ſmiling aſpect; but nothing could exhilerate the ſpirits of our heroine: ſhe walked penſively by the ſide of the road, ſecure in her appearance, as well as in her real poverty, from all fear of the robber, and her beauty ſo effectually ſhrouded, as to preclude the obſervation of the libertine.

She walked till paſt noon, when the increaſing heat of the ſun made her faint, and ſhe found herſelf both tired and hungry. But where was ſhe to go for reſt; or to whom apply for a morſel of bread?—queſtions ſhe was unable to anſwer; but ſhe went into a little copſe by the ſide of the road, and throwing herſelf upon the ground, ſhe fell into a paſſion of tears.

She

She had not long indulged her full heart by this kindly relief, ere ſhe heard groans at a ſmall diſtance. She ſtarted up; liſtened; ſhe heard them again; and, going towards the place from whence they proceeded, ſhe ſaw a woman lying on the ground, who ſeeing her, begged her aſſiſtance for the love of God.

There was no neceſſity for repeating the adjuration. Perſiana haſtened to her, and enquiring the occaſion of her diſtreſs, was told that ſhe had been beaten by her inhuman huſband, without any provocation in the world, and left there to die: our compaſſionate heroine aſſiſted her to ſit upright; and then the poor woman complained of being faint and hungry, and intreated her to procure ſome refreſhment.

"I would gladly relieve you, good woman," ſaid Perſiana, "but, alas! I have it not in my power; I am faint and hungry alſo, without a farthing in my pocket: perhaps you will be able, with the aſſiſtance of my arm, to walk to that town, which does not ſeem far off. I am not very ſtrong, but I think I can lead you ſo far; and there, as I ſuppoſe you have ſome money, or probably are of ſome buſineſs, your wants may be ſupplied."

"No, no," ſaid the woman, "I have no money, my curſed huſband took care of that; and as to the matter of buſineſs—I have ſome ballads, but I can't read, and have no matters of a voice; my huſband had a fine pipe indeed.—Can *you* ſing?"

"A little."

"Well,

"Well, ſuppoſe we try to get to that town? you ſing my ballads, and we go halves in what we get?"

Perſiana did not diſſent from the articles of this partnerſhip, which held forth a proſpect of ſome alleviation, though a poor one, not only of her own immediate wants but thoſe of another alſo. She aſſiſted the woman to riſe from the ground, who leaned heavily on her arm, and our poor heroine found great difficulty in dragging her the tedious mile, which was the diſtance they were off the town.

They ſat down to reſt themſelves, before they entered, a few minutes by the ſide of a little brook, where they refreſhed themſelves by drinking of its ſtream out of their hands: the ballads were pulled out of the good woman's pocket; ſmoothed a little; they

walked feebly and tottering into the town, and Perſiana began.

The uncommon ſweetneſs of her voice ſoon drew a croud after them; the ballads met a rapid ſale, and our heroine and her ragged companion retreated, with as much expedition as their ſtrength would allow, to a little alehouſe, where they had the ſatisfaction of regaling deliciouſly on ſome delicate cow-heel, which was then hot on the table; to which the woman added a quartern of gin, and uſed as many arguments as the ſubject would allow, to perſuade Perſiana to do the ſame She was, however, proof againſt her eloquence, and preferred waſhing down the rich viands with a draught of cold water.

This recruit of ſtrength enabled them to go to a ſtationer's ſhop in the

town,

town, where they purchaſed a new aſſortment of ſongs, rather more to Perſiana's taſte, and ſhe began again.

There had been that day, at one of the moſt conſiderable inns, a juſtice ſitting, which had brought a great many people to it; the parties had drank plentifully of wine to refreſh themſelves after the buſineſs was over, and were ſitting very jovially round their bottle in a room next the ſtreet, with the windows open, when the fine voice of the ballad-ſinger attracted the attention of every one; for there are few ears inſenſible to harmony, and few hearts can hear it unmoved.

Her ſongs were heard with rapture; they were loudly encored; and ſo much money was thrown from the windows, that the woman, whoſe ſtrength was amazingly recovered by

the gin, had full employment to pick it up; while Perſiana was exerting all her powers to give them pleaſure: and ſo ſucceſsful were thoſe efforts, that the principal magiſtrate, who was not remarkable for ſweetneſs of temper, declared that it was d—d fine, and that he had never heard any thing ſo charming before; and inſiſted upon her coming into the room to entertain him there. This Perſiana was very unwilling to do; but at laſt complied with reluctance, when her companion whiſpered to her that if ſhe did not, ſo ſevere was his worſhip, that it was a thouſand to one but they were both ſent to bridewel as vagrants; and they went into the room together.

Our heroine was offered wine; but that ſhe refuſed, and only requeſted

permiſſion

permiſſion to ſit. This granted her, ſhe gave them a great many ſongs, with ſuch ſweetneſs, yet ſuch power of voice, and in ſo fine a ſtyle, that all were enraptured with her; and ſome of the younger of the company were for examining her face, ſwearing that ſo divine a voice muſt have as angelic a perſon.

Their impertinent curioſity would have diveſted her of both hat and cap, had ſhe not intereſted that magiſtrate in her favour who had deſired her coming, by ſome well placed compliments on his dignity and conſequence, of both which he was extremely tenacious, and he interpoſed in her favour with proper effect.

Peace and good order happily reſtored, more ſongs were called for; during which a man belonging to a

company of ſtrolling players came in to ſolicit their worſhip's permiſſion to exhibit in the town, and which they in unwonted good-humour, their ſpirits harmonized by muſic and wine, gave him leave to do.

The bottle circulated with great rapidity; of which, though Perſiana refuſed to partake, ſhe found her companion by no means ſo ſcrupulous; and ſaw evidently an intention to make her drunk. This determined her to ſtay no longer; ſhe withſtood their vociferous importunities, by alledging that ſhe was ſo fatigued ſhe could ſing no more; and at laſt, though with great difficulty, dragged her companion out of the room; but not till the good company, in the preſent openneſs of their hearts, had proved themſelves almoſt as liberal of their money

money as their praiſe; among whom the ſtrolling player, who had at his own requeſt been permitted to ſtay in the room to hear the ballad-ſinger, was not the moſt parſimonious; and our heroine and her companion retired to their hovel of an inn, loaden with what the latter thought inexhauſtible riches; which ſo exhilerated her ſpirits, that ſhe determined to crown her felicity by getting completely drunk.

In this commendable purſuit of happineſs our heroine was preparing to leave her, when a young man entered the room, who had ſat near her in the magiſtrate's party, and had been one of the moſt troubleſome in his attempts to diſcover her face: he had been ſo ſucceſsful in gratifying his impertinent curioſity, as to perceive

ceive it was very handſome; but not chuſing to raiſe himſelf up any rivals, by making the diſcovery public, he ſaid nothing, but determined to make his own advantage. He followed her to this place, and tipping the woman of the houſe ſomething to procure her good-will, he became ſo warm and impertinent in his addreſſes, that Perſiana broke from him in great anger, and retiring to her wretched bed-chamber, faſtened it as well as ſhe could, and, without undreſſing herſelf, threw herſelf on a bed which ſhe felt an extreme repugnance to touch, and ſought in ſleep a momentary oblivion of her woes.

Compaſſion had introduced our heroine to her preſent companion, and a deſire of alleviating their mutual diſtreſs, detained them together the reſt of

of the day; but Perſiana roſe in the morning with a reſolution to put an end to the diſagreeable connexion, by giving her the greateſt part of the money, and leaving her.

The firſt part of her intention ſhe found very eaſy to accompliſh, but the other proved a matter of unſurmountable difficulty: the woman pocketed the money with perfect ſatisfaction, but would not hear of a ſeparation; ſwearing ſhe had taken ſuch a fancy to our heroine, that ſhe would live and die with her.

Though ſhe could have diſpenſed with this violent attachment, Perſiana was too prudent to make many objections to it; plainly ſeeing the mind ſhe had to deal with was of ſuch a texture that arguments would be of no avail, and was of too irritable a

nature

nature to contend with; she therefore submitted to eat her breakfast with her, with a mutual appearance of amity.

Before this meal was finished, the gentleman who had made them an evening visit again entered, and renewed his offers of love to our heroine with great fervency; but as his proposals, though very splendid, did not meet her approbation, she rejected them in so scornful and determined a manner, that he was constrained to put an end to them; but she observed him, whilst she was settling the bill with the landlady, talking very earnestly to her companion.

They soon after sat out, still pursuing the London road; but had not walked above half an hour when her companion complained of being very tired,

tired, and ſolicited her to go into a wood by the ſide of the road, where they might ſit down in the ſhade; but when the other ſeemed to be leading into the thickeſt part, Perſiana inſiſted ſhe would go no farther, as they were now in ſufficient ſhade, and were far enough from the road, the other grumblingly acquieſced, and they ſat down.

They had not been ſeated many minutes, before our heroine found herſelf ſuddenly ſeized behind, and dragged along. She gave many loud and piercing ſhrieks, when the man who had hold of her, curſing her for the uproar ſhe made, ſtopt, and pulling out a ſilk handkerchief, gave it to the woman, deſiring her to tie it croſs her mouth, which, as he held her arms faſt, ſhe ſoon did; but not before

Perſiana

Perſiana had made the utmoſt uſe of her voice, by the loudeſt ſcreams in her power.

Intirely now in the power of the moſt hardened and diabolical of the human ſpecies, the wretched and agonized Perſiana ſaw no hopes of eſcaping the greateſt of all poſſible misfortunes, when ſuddenly a man ruſhed into the place, and with a large ſtick which he had fortunately in his hand, laid her male adverſary proſtrate in the duſt; and the woman, ſeeing the fate of her colleague, ran off.

Her kind deliverer raiſed her from the ground; her ſtrength ſo exhauſted that ſhe could not have riſen without that aſſiſtance, and he freed her from the handkerchief, which had been tied ſo tight and ſo roughly that it had cut her lip and made her mouth bleed; curſing,

curſing, at the ſame time, the inhumanity of the vile wretches. He then went to examine the ſtate of the fallen foe; while Perſiana, with one arm round a tree for ſupport, her head leaning againſt the trunk, her mind a chaos of conflicting and various paſſions, found a ſalutary relief for her almoſt burſting heart, in a violent effuſion of tears.

CHAP.

CHAPTER XVIII.

——By that heaven who ſees thy tears,
By faith and friendſhip's ſympathy divine,
Could I the ſorrows heal I more than ſhare,
This boſom, truſt me, ſhould from thine transfer
It's ſharpeſt grief.

MALLET.

THE inhuman wretch who had been near compleating our heroine's misfortunes, proved to be the young man who had teized her in the morning: as he breathed, the very ſtill manner in which he laid appeared more the effect of policy than hurt; her champion left him, and taking Perſiana's arm under his, walked with her back to the town from whence

ſhe

ſhe came; her gratitude for his critical aſſiſtance making her look up to him as an angel ſent from heaven for her reſcue, and induced her implicitly to conform to what he thought beſt for her.

Indeed his manly graces would have attracted her admiration, had they not been viewed through that partial medium; for his figure was elegant, and his face uncommonly handſome: he belonged to the ſtrolling company we have before mentioned, and was the one deputed by the manager to ſolicit the indulgence of the magiſtrates, where he heard with admiration the ſweet melody of our ballad-ſinger, and to the pleaſure which the performing a generous action always gave him was added peculiar ſatisfaction, when he perceived

it was that little ſyren he had been ſo fortunate as to preſerve, by hearing her ſcreams as he paſſed along the road.

Not but what he imagined her reſiſtance originated more from caprice than virtue; the dirtineſs and derangement of a dreſs originally coarſe and ordinary; the company he had ſeen her in, a drunken abandoned vagrant; gave him no exalted ideas of either her quality or principles: but by what little he had ſeen of a face disfigured by blood and duſt, and inveloped as her's was, he perceived it was very pretty, and he yet had the gallantry to reſpect even the caprices of the young and handſome.

With much attention, and many aſſurances of protection if her adverſary ſhould dare to purſue her, he

ſupported

ſupported her feeble and trembling ſteps to the town. Her expreſſions of gratitude, at firſt, were broken, incoherent, and almoſt inarticulate; but as the firſt flutters of her mind wore a little off, her words became clearer, though her ſentences were extremely disjointed, and "honour dearer than life," was uttered with peculiar energy.

He ſmiled:—"The girl has been reading romances with her ballads," ſaid he to himſelf; but as he found her very little able to converſe, he troubled her with very few queſtions. When they arrived at the town, he did not chuſe to carry her to his own lodgings, but conducted her to a ſmall public houſe, ſomewhat better than the one where ſhe had ſpent the preceding night: but overcome

with fatigue, and a variety of the moſt painful ſenſations, our unhappy heroine had no ſooner entered the little parlour into which he led her, than ſhe fainted away.

The landlady was ſummoned in great haſte, who was a very notable dame, and not troubled with very much delicacy: ſhe knew air was very proper for people in a ſwoon, and therefore with wonderful expedition not only diveſted her of her hat and cap but alſo of her wrapper-cloak, and bared her neck and boſom; and the player gazed in equal admiration and aſtoniſhment on a complexion fairer than the new fallen ſnow, on features more regular and more beautiful than had ever, till then, reached his eye: but he perceived her recovering, and had ſo much true delicacy

as

as to withdraw, that he might ſpare her the confuſion of knowing that ſhe had been ſeen in her preſent derangement by a man; and commiſſioning the man of the houſe to get every thing proper for her accommodation, not only eatables, but cloaths if they were thought neceſſary, he ſaid he would call again towards evening, and departed.

In the evening he called again, and found Perſiana, though now by the aſſiſtance of the woman of the houſe ſhe made a much more creditable figure in the article of dreſs, yet in ſuch a debilitated ſtate, from ſeveral ſucceſſive faintings, that he was greatly alarmed.

"O Sir!" ſhe replied to ſome very tender expreſſions of concern, "if you knew me, you would congratulate me

on these evident approaches to those happy confines 'where the wicked cease 'from troubling, and where the weary 'are at rest.' Life, desirable to most others, detains me in sad bondage to misery; my retrospects are painful; my prospects hideous; and I shrink into the grave as my only refuge! You, Sir—O! how shall I speak my gratitude!—you, Sir, have enabled me to reach it without dishonour."

"Your friends, Madam," said Lowther, which was the name of her deliverer, half choaked with feelings, the tokens of which he was in vain endeavouring to suppress—— "your friends ought to know——"

"I have *none*, Sir. In early infancy, by a very terrible accident, I was separated from my natural ones; a fatal misapprehension severed me from

from thoſe to whom benevolence had united me: hunted from ſociety by perfidy, conſigned to the moſt irremediable poverty, not one tongue will enquire my fate, not one tender tear be ſhed over it."

"Say not *one* tear, Madam?"

"Oh Sir! your heart is compaſſionate. I ſee, and I ſee with pleaſure, that there is *one* man who has not the hyæna's ſavage ſoul. If I have touched your generous boſom, promiſe me that you will ſee me laid decently in my kindred earth—Oh Sir! ſee my grave dug deep—ſecured—let no unhallowed hands tear up my cold remains."

Lowther ſtarted up. He apprehended a delirium, and ran out of the room to order a phyſician: he returned, and by the moſt tender ſooth-

ings endeavoured to calm her mind; and ſhe, whoſe ſoul was formed in nature's ſofteſt mould, who really ſuffered more from a deprivation of that kindneſs to which ſhe had been habituated, than for that of thoſe exterior comforts annexed to it, found in his attempts to alleviate her ſorrows a balm for her wounded mind.

The phyſician came, and Lowther withdrew. He enquired the ſymptoms of her diſorder. She looked up in his face. It was not that the man was ugly, but that not one glimpſe of ſoul irradiated his countenance, that ſhe felt ſuch a repugnance to communicate to him the only ſource of her languid ſtate—her ſorrows: but ſhe complained much of want of reſt, and of an extreme and dying languor.

The

The phyſician, tho' a ſtranger to the finer feelings, was by no means deficient in underſtanding or defective in ſkill, and he pronounced her diſorder nervous. "Theſe flutters of the pulſe, Madam," ſaid he, "originate not from fever, but a tumult of the ſpirits: this languor is occaſioned by violent grief, or a long indulged uneaſineſs: you muſt be your own phyſician young lady: I can order you but very little: you ſhall have ſomething which will compoſe you for the night; a few corroborating draughts to aſſiſt your ſtrength, which muſt be taken to-morrow; but I warn you that it reſts with yourſelf to give them effect. If you endeavour to throw off your uneaſineſs, you will ſoon be perfectly well, but if the effort is not made, I will not be anſwerable for the conſequences."

The

The ſame ſtory he told to Lowther, who eagerly enquired his opinion. "She will certainly do well," ſaid he, "or it will be her own fault. If ſhe obtains reſt to-night from the draft which I ſhall order her, ſhe will be quite another thing to-morrow. But who, Sir, is this young lady? She looks, ſhe talks like a woman of the firſt faſhion and education: but ſurely this is a very ſtrange place for ſuch an one to be in?"

"It is Sir; but there is a myſtery which at preſent cannot be developed. Here is your fee Sir."

"Sir I thank you. But really now this young lady—ſhe is your ſiſter, I ſuppoſe?" added he after a pauſe, examining the perſon of the player very much. "Oh, ſhe *muſt* be your ſiſter, for I think you are wonderfully alike."

"Indeed,

"Indeed, Sir, you do me a great deal too much honour."

"Well, well," ſaid he, with much quickneſs, "if ſhe is *not* your ſiſter, one would think ſuch a fine young fellow as yourſelf might find means to comfort ſo elegant a creature, and not ſuffer her to die with grief."

"Sir, ſhe is a woman of honour, and her ſorrows are ſacred."

"Sir, I beg your pardon:—I did not intend impertinently to pry—Sir, I wiſh you a very good evening."

The next morning evinced, that if the good man's ſkill was not equal to his curioſity, at leaſt that he had a very competent ſhare; for Lowther, on making his viſit, found Perſiana up, and in the parlour of the little inn, at breakfaſt, ſo much recovered that he was very agreeably ſurpriſed.

If

If he thought her beautiful before, in her harraſſed and languid ſtate, he deemed her now irreſiſtible, and delivered up his ſoul to the admiration of the moſt finiſhed form and face, that "painting could expreſs, or youthful poets fancy when they love." Her eyes, radiant with ſoul, turned on him with an expreſſion of the livelieſt gratitude; her converſation, animated and informed, clothed in the moſt elegant language, ſtole on his ears in a voice of melody.

And to confeſs a truth, all charming as he thought her, he appeared little leſs ſo in the eyes of our heroine: tall, graceful, finely formed, dignity in his air, elegance in his manners, features which would bear the teſt of criticiſm in the detail, in the *tout enſemble* manly, animated; among which,

which, a pair of fine large dark eyes by their forcible expreſſion left very little occaſion for the addition of ſpeech, yet did that ſpeech drop with perſuaſive and honeyed accents on the ſoul, and diſcover the rich treaſures of a well cultivated mind, the generous and refined ſentiments of a benevolent and exquiſitely feeling heart.

Such was Lowther; and what may naturally be ſuppoſed would be the impreſſion of ſuch a combination of all that is amiable, or admirable in perſon and mind, on a young, tender, unattached heart, prepared by the ſoft emotions of gratitude to place every good quality in the ſtrongeſt point of view, and enabled by taſte and judgment to feel and diſcriminate all their beauties?

His expreſſive eyes beaming on her with united admiration and compaſſion, by no looſe or bold glance gave her ſoul alarm; ſhe ſaw nothing but her deliverer from danger, her ſupporter in ſickneſs, her conſoler in ſorrow: he ſeemed her brother, nay almoſt herſelf; for ſhe heard her own ſentiments delineated with ſuch exact preciſion that ſhe fancied one ſoul animated them both; and love, under the guiſe of friendſhip, found ſuch unreſiſting acceſs, that he had entrenched himſelf in the inmoſt receſſes of her heart ere ſhe ſuſpected he had attempted the entrance.

After many congratulations on his ſide on her recovered ſtate, many effuſions of gratitude on her's on the part he had taken towards that recovery, for ſhe declared ſhe owed her life

life to him in his care to procure her the neceſſary ſupports of it, as ſhe did her honour to his generous interpoſition, ſhe ſaid with her recruited ſtrength ſhe thought herſelf now very able to purſue her journey to town.

Lowther ſighed at the idea of parting; a ſympathetic ſigh heaved the boſom of Perſiana, without her even being ſenſible of the ſoft reſponſe. A momentary pauſe enſued.

"And would you again," ſaid he at laſt, "tempt danger by taking ſuch a journey on foot and unprotected?"

"I can wrap myſelf up in my dreſs from obſervation, and get a place in ſome waggon."

"What a carriage!" exclaimed he, gazing on her elegant figure. "And when

when you arrive there, Madam, have you any friends who will ſupport you?"

"I have one who will point me out ſome *method* of ſupport."

"Theſe hands," ſaid he taking one, looking at it's delicate form, and preſſing it between both his—"this ſoft piece of living ſnow is very unuſed to labour."

"But it may be taught," anſwered ſhe, with a half ſmile withdrawing it.

"I fear to be thought impertinent by too many enquiries, yet your declarations of laſt night of an unprotected, unſupported ſtate, ſtill vibrate on my heart—have intereſted it ſo deeply in your welfare—if I were worthy your confidence—if you would ſuffer me to be of uſe to you—you know not how happy it would make me."

The

The generous ſolicitude which glowed in his cheek, which ſpoke more eloquently than words in his ardent eye, and which was evidently checked only by his delicacy and his fears of offending her, added to the ſoft pleadings of ſomething elſe, which ſhe did not perfectly underſtand, in her heart, determined Perſiana to have no reſerves to one who ſeemed ſo worthy of her confidence, but to acquaint him with her whole ſtory, and take his advice on her future conduct.

This ſhe did; and recited ſimply and with unſtudied pathos, a tale which excited his tendereſt compaſſion, and called forth his warmeſt plaudit.

"I cannot," ſaid he, after he had talked ſome time on the ſubject, "words are inadequate to expreſs my feelings for your diſtreſſes, or

my admiration of your conduct: your charming confidence claims an equal one. I am not what I ſeem. I am the ſecond ſon of a man of diſtinguiſhed rank, and like you loſt my mother early in life by a ſimilar misfortune; ſhe left my father four children, three ſons and a daughter: we were all young, and my father, who doated on her, would not hear of a ſecond marriage, but ſecluding himſelf from the world, devoted himſelf to our care and education; but ſhut up from ſociety, gloomily brooding over irremediable ſorrows, his temper became ſoured, and he, who had by nature an excellent heart and exquiſite feelings, who was by education a moſt accompliſhed gentleman, deſcended gradually from tender melancholy to reſtleſs peeviſhneſs. He ſtill loves his

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children, and to make them happy is his ſtudy; but, unfortunately, he neglects to think how *their* ideas of what conſtitutes happineſs and his *own* may vary; and with unrelenting obſtinacy perſiſts in inſiſting upon their being made happy *his* way: my eldeſt brother he has not ſeen for theſe two years, becauſe he choſe an amiable woman for his wife who had not what my father thought a ſufficiency of fortune to make him *comfortable*, though they live in great *felicity* on my mother's jointure, the poſſeſſion of which rendered him ſo far independent. My ſiſter he has made wretched by forbidding her to think of a man to whom no other objection could be made than the want of a title, or fortune to keep her ſuch an equipage as he thinks abſolutely neceſſary for the

happineſs of a woman: for me, who have not a ſhilling independent of him, he has ſelected a wife immenſely rich, but diſguſting in her perſon, and below mediocrity in her underſtanding, whom, with unfeeling obduracy, he inſiſted upon my taking. I found that no remonſtrances, no arguments would be of any avail: to ſhun, therefore, an open rupture, an irreconcileable quarrel, I one moon-light night packed up my cloaths and linen in a ſoldier's knapſack, and diſguiſed in the dreſs of one, I walked forth; I ſoon reached a diſtant part of the kingdom, and happening of this ſtrolling company, I inliſted myſelf into it.

"Condemned as I am to lead a wandering life unknown, or entirely break with a father whom with all his failings I highly reſpect, ſince I am well

well assured they originate from a laudable though mistaken motive; and that, paradoxical as it may seem, he renders his children wretched merely by an over solicitude for their happiness: yet in this situation I cannot render you, Madam, the service which I could otherwise do; for, if I discover myself, I am certain no art or force will be neglected to carry me back; my sister-in-law I am sure would be delighted to have you with her, but she and my brother are unfortunately out of England; I will write to my own sister; her power, poor girl, is small, but I know she will keep my secret, and do what she can to oblige me; if she *could* receive you, you would be pleased with *her*, for she is the most amiable and best of young women. I will write immediately."

He did ſo; and whilſt they waited for an anſwer Perſiana had clothes and linen provided to enable her to make a decent appearance, and ſhe was obliged, though reluctantly, to lay herſelf under theſe new obligations, or hazard ſtrange conjectures among thoſe to whom ſhe was to be introduced; a painful alternative to a mind like hers.

Every hour which Lowther, or rather Gordus, for that was his *real* name, had to ſpare from the neceſſary avocations of the theatre, was devoted to our heroine, the intimacy with which they converſed enabled them more clearly to diſcern the perfections which each poſſeſſed, and more cloſely rivited their mutual chains: yet Perſiana called the pleaſures which ſhe experienced in thoſe hours, the joys of *friendſhip*; and Gordus poſſeſſed too much

much of that timidity which ever accompanies a real paſſion, and prized too highly thoſe delicious moments of unreſerved communication of ſoul, to hazard the being deprived of them by confeſſing his love was deſtitute of platoniſm. As he did not at firſt acquaint her with the name of his family, ſhe afterwards learned that his father was the Earl of Welbrooke, and his brother was called the Viſcount Ellwood.

CHAPTER XIX.

So long as Gayon with her communed,
Unto the ground ſhe caſt her modeſt eye,
And ever and anone with roſy red
The baſhful blood her ſnowy cheekes did dye,
That her's became as poliſh'd yvory,
Which cunning crafteſman hand hath overlaid
With fayre vermilion.

SPENCER.

ONE little week had winged its rapid flight, and another was began: the time was arrived in which an anſwer to Gordus from his ſiſter might be expected; Perſiana was waiting for it with impatience, Gordus pretending out of complaiſance to do the ſame, though he could not think of a ſepa-

ration

ration without agony: they had paſſed the evening together, happy in each other's ſociety, and parted late with mutual reluctance, as if having a preſentiment of what was to follow.

For when our amiable ſtroller reached his inn, he obſerved ſtanding at the door a chariot and four with ſeveral attendants; and had no ſooner entered the houſe, when he found himſelf ſeized by ſeveral men, and, in ſpite of all his efforts to diſengage himſelf, forcibly thruſt into the carriage, which was immediately driven off at a great rate.

This incident was related to our heroine the next morning, who could eaſily account for it by ſuppoſing, that the letter of Gordus to his ſiſter had, by ſome accident, fallen into his father's hands; and ſhe wept without ceaſing

ceaſing for being the unfortunate cauſe of his captivity. Perhaps her tears were more abundant from an apprehenſion that he might be induced by the reverence which ſhe knew he had for his father, to obey his command in the choice of a wife; and to the exquiſite pain this ſuppoſition gave her, ſhe was indebted for the diſcovery of the true ſtate of her heart; and perceived that a more poignant paſſion than friendſhip had gained an aſcendant there.

Various were the conjectures in the town on this ſtrange affair. It was a very ſingular buſineſs, every body agreed. A young man carried off in that ſtyle! they could in no way account for it; unleſs, indeed, he was a highwayman. This was eſteemed a very *natural* ſuppoſition. The land-

lord

lord of the inn ſaid that, to be ſure, the men who took him were very good ſort of men, paid him not only for what they had themſelves, but alſo for Muſter Lowther's arrears; but they were very peeviſh, very ſhy, did not care to anſwer any queſtions that he aſked—in ſhort, he could not but ſay that he thought one of them was either Muſter Jealous or Muſter Bond, for he ſeemed to carry a high hand over the reſt.

Thus this young man, who by his ſkill in acting, (for he really poſſeſſed a more than common ſhare, and repreſented the lover or the hero of the ſcene with exquiſite grace) had attracted much admiration on the ſtage, and by his affability and politeneſs had gained many friends, was univerſally reprobated as a highwayman; and

then

then it came out that he kept a *miſs* in town. What an offence to decency! the whole town was ſcandalized, and it was debated in full aſſembly whether it would be beſt to ſend her to Bow-ſtreet after her paramour, where ſhe might be of uſe in bringing his offences to light; to bridewell, to do penance for her wickedneſs by hard labour for a month; or pack her, bag and baggage, immediately out of the town, for fear ſhe ſhould become chargeable to the pariſh.

The female part of the aſſembly were unanimous for the ſecond propoſition, bridewell and hard labour; for their virtuous indignation was raiſed and they declared that nothing could be too bad for ſuch *monſters*: the more moderate of the male part inclined to the laſt; indeed the firſt became wholly exploded.

exploded, when one gentleman obſerved, that tho' they had good reaſon to ſuppoſe the young man was carried to Bow ſtreet; yet as they had no poſitive proof, if they *ſhould* be miſtaken the expence of ſending her thither would be loſt: he therefore propoſed making her ſwear to her pariſh, and ſending her to it.

This amendment of the plan was generally approved, and it was determined ſhe ſhould be taken before a Juſtice of the Peace the next morning: but our affrighted heroine having ſome notice of their intentions from the woman of the houſe, whoſe heart ſhe had won by the ſweetneſs of her manners, ſhe haſtily packed up her little matters, leaving ſome of her new made clothes behind, as an equivalent for the arrears of her lodging, and taking

money

money upon ſome others, becauſe ſhe was unwilling to be quite deſtitute of that neceſſary article; with the ſtable boy for her guide and protector, ſhe ſpared them the trouble of ſending her to her pariſh, by walking off before ſunriſe to the next town, where ſhe got into a ſtage waggon, and arrived without any accident in London.

Though it was late when the elegant carriage in which Perſiana had journeyed arrived in town, ſhe had a hackney coach immediately ſent for, and drove to Mrs. Larkins, whom ſhe found at home, ſurpriſed and rejoiced to ſee her; and our heroine, fatigued in body, and a mind harraſſed with a thouſand inquietudes, flew to her friendly boſom as a frighted bird to its place of refuge.

After a minute recital of her diſappointments, her difficulties, her dangers,

gers, a tale which beguiled the eyes of Mrs. Larkins of many tears, with all the tenderneſs of an only and darling child, ſhe was put into a clean and comfortable bed by that friendly woman, where ſhe enjoyed the cordial of uninterrupted repoſe.

In the morning Mrs. Larkins informed Perſiana, that not recollecting any perſon in whom ſhe could confide, ſhe had herſelf carried the money and jewels to Lord Normanton's houſe, with the letter: his Lordſhip, ſhe ſaid, was at home, and would ſee her: he endeavoured by every art to learn tidings of our heroine, and ſpared neither arguments nor promiſes to render Mrs. Larkins propitious to his deſigns: but on finding her inexorable, and the object of his purſuit out of his reach, he refuſed to take either the money or jewels,

jewels, but inſiſted upon Mrs. Larkins taking them back for the uſe of Perſiana; whom he proteſted, in ſpite of her cruelty, he loved too fervently not to compaſſionate her unſupported ſtate, and wiſhed by them to ſecure her a maintenance, till her merit ſhould procure her a better, but he would by no arguments be induced to give up her caſket, but upon condition that ſhe claimed it in perſon, when he declared upon his honour ſhe ſhould immediately have it.

"Then," ſaid Perſiana ſighing, "it muſt for ever remain with him; for not even to regain thoſe precious reliques of my dear unknown parent, the only means of aſcertaining my birth, will I truſt myſelf to the vile plotter of my ruin. Welcome obſcurity, welcome poverty, if I have no *other means* of

of avoiding either but at the hazard of my honour, or accepting what was intended as the price of it. His ſplendid preſents I *muſt* keep, if he will not take them back, but I will carefully keep them as a depoſit, to be returned at ſome future time; and now Mrs. Larkin tell me what I am to do: inſtruct me how I am to procure my temperate morſel. I feel an invincible repugnance to being ſhut up in this great town. Oh that I could get into ſome creditable family in the country. Have you no acquaintance, my dear friend, who could point out to me ſuch an one?"

Mrs. Larkins could think of none but the embroiderer who had before employed Perſiana, who was very eminent in her way, and her ſhop frequented by ladies of the firſt faſhion;

and to her, not to loſe any time, ſhe immediately went.

On telling her errand, "you are the luckieſt creature in the world," exclaimed Mrs. Leighton, "for I was yeſterday to take directions of the Ducheſs of L—— for an embroidered crape petticoat: her Grace came to town but the day before in her way to Margate: ſhe had a lady with her in deep mourning, to whom her Grace ſeemed very attentive, and was decided by her judgment in ſome little diſputable points. Juſt before I came away ſhe left the room: that lady, ſaid the Ducheſs to me, is the moſt amiable woman in the world, Leighton, and is as much to be pitied; for ſhe has lately loſt her only child, a beautiful and accompliſhed girl: there is no dragging her into the world; but ſhe

ſhe is determined, in ſpite of every argument I can uſe, to mope over her ſorrows in the country; and there ſhe will be ſoon loſt in melancholy, unleſs her friends can provide an agreeable companion for her, for ſhe has too much the liſtleſsneſs of grief to ſeek out for ſuch an one herſelf. But I know of none whoſe education would fit them for ſuch a ſituation, whoſe tempers would be ſufficiently accommodating to it: perhaps, Leighton, *you* can aſſiſt me; you have a general acquaintance among the middling orders; it might be a comfortable place for ſome clergyman's or tradeſman's daughter, educated beyond her ſtation and reduced. There are many ſuch I believe. Do, good Leighton, look round: your own good ſenſe will point out the proper requiſites, and

pecuniary matters would be made perfectly eaſy.

"I promiſed her Grace to exert my utmoſt efforts in ſearch of ſuch a perſon, and your young friend, as you deſcribe her, would be the very thing. The Ducheſs has not yet left her apartment: ſhe will be pleaſed at my zeal to ſerve her: take a hackney coach therefore, fetch the young lady, and we will go inſtantly."

Mrs. Larkins flew in raptures to our heroine with this agreeable intelligence. Little alteration in her dreſs was neceſſary, for ſhe was perfectly neat, and ſhe gave herſelf no concern as to any thing elſe. The embroiderer, with whoſe ideas a ſhewy dreſs was abſolutely requiſite, made ſome objection to her Quaker-like appearance, but was charmed with Perſiana herſelf; and

and they ſoon found themſelves in the antichamber of —— houſe, Mrs. Larkins waiting anxiouſly at the embroiderer's till their return.

Mrs. Leighton found a ready admittance to her Grace; and our heroine was not ſuffered long to wait, for after a very ſhort previous converſation, ſhe returned to Perſiana, and introduced her to the Ducheſs and Mrs. Mildmay.

With palpitating heart, trembling ſteps, and viſible emotion, ſhe entered the dreſſing room: her perturbations were not unremarked by the two pair of ſcrutinizing eyes which were fixed on her the moment ſhe appeared: but ſhe loſt nothing in their opinion by them, nor yet by the extreme ſimplicity of her dreſs. She curtſeyed low: it was the ſinkings of a ſpirit humbled by

misfortune, and imploring a refuge from them: ſhe approached ſlowly and reſpectfully; an air of dignity, which no dreſs or humiliating circumſtance could diveſt her of, accompanied her ſteps; her modeſt eyes with timid glances now juſt lifted up to the ladies, now caſt on the carpet, her cheek deeply ſuffuſed with the crimſon glow.

The ladies looked at her and then at each other, with a pleaſing kind of wonder. "Really," ſaid Mrs. Mildmay, with a ſmile, "I believe I ſhall, like Yoric, engage this young lady firſt, and enquire her qualifications afterwards."

"Indeed," ſaid the Ducheſs, "a good countenance has been called a letter of recommendation, and this young lady's is drawn with the moſt powerful claim on the heart I ever inſpected;

ſpected; yet not to give too much indulgence to our feelings, ſhe will I am ſure pardon a few requiſite queſtions."

The delicacy, the tenderneſs of this reception charmed our heroine, and calmed her ſpirits; ſhe anſwered with great readineſs, tho' with great modeſty, thoſe queſtions which were thought requiſite, and which regarded only her qualifications; for character, as ſhe was introduced by Mrs. Leighton, was out of the queſtion; both ladies taking it for granted ſhe would not introduce a young woman of a blemiſhed or doubtful one.

Theſe queſtions ſatisfactorily anſwered, the pecuniary part of the buſineſs was ſoon adjuſted; for Mrs. Mildmay was generous, and our heroine was ſatisfied with whatever ſhe

purpoſed. She had orders to attend in two days, at which time Mrs. Mildmay intended to ſet out for the country; and as ſhe took a reſpectful leave, her beautiful countenance lightened up with ſmiles of pleaſure.

At the appointed time Perſiana parting from Mrs. Larkins in the moſt affectionate manner, and ſettling with her a plan of correſpondence, attended her new patroneſs, who received her with tenderneſs, and all things being ready for their journey, they, in a few hours, found themſelves on the road to Mrs. Mildmay's ſeat in Lincolnſhire.

CHAPTER XX.

Welcome ye ſhades! ye bowery thickets hail!
Ye lofty pines! ye venerable oaks!
Ye aſhes wild reſounding o'er the ſteep!
Delicious is your ſhelter to the ſoul,
As to the hunted hart the ſallying ſpring,
Or ſtream full-flowing.

THOMSON.

IF Mrs. Mildmay was prepoſſeſſed in favour of Perſiana at her firſt interview, our heroine experienced as warm a partiality for Mrs. Mildmay. A few days converſation confirmed the impulſe of the moment, and a very ſhort time ripened what was at firſt but the inſtinctive attraction of kindred

kindred ſouls, into the warmeſt eſteem and friendſhip.

Mrs. Mildmay was about forty; ſhe had never been diſtinguiſhed for either the beauty or plainneſs of her features, but their *tout enſemble* was always thought infinitely agreeable; and, when our heroine ſaw her, were become extremely intereſting by the ſoft melancholy with which they were pervaded.

This lady had married, very early in life, a man as tenderly beloved by her as he was reſpected by all his acquaintance: bleſſed in mutual affection, partaking largely the gifts of ſmiling fortune; happy in a daughter, beautiful, virtuous, amiable, and accompliſhed; their felicity was greater than falls to the common lot of mortality.

—— Alas!

——— Alas!
—— The ſpider's moſt attenuated thread
Is cord, is cable to man's tender tye on earthly bliſs!

A fatal diſtemper ſuddenly ſeized her beloved huſband, and ſnatching him from her ere, by the cruel kindneſs of her friends in concealing it, ſhe apprehended him in any danger, left her in a ſort of amaze, an aſtoniſhment of grief, an overwhelming wildneſs of ſorrow, which was near devouring her intellects, and cruſhing her conſtitution.

Time at length, aided by the moſt animated ſenſe of the acquieſcence due to the divine decrees, blunted the keen edge of affliction, and ſoftened the poignancy of her grief to a tender and not unpleaſing melancholy. Formed to love with fervour, all her affections

affections now centered in her charming daughter, whose beauty and accomplishments drew round her a croud of adorers, and laid titles and wealth at her feet. But wealth and titles had no charms for the unhappy Caroline; her heart, formed in nature's softest mould, had early imbibed a tender and unchangable passion for a young neighbouring nobleman, who, unconscious of the happy distinction, had addressed and married a lady of her acquaintance.

"Concealment" (of a passion which neither the efforts of reason or religion could eradicate) "like a worm in the bud, fed on her damask cheek." Her mother, who lived but in her smiles, who knew no happiness but in seeing her child happy, beheld with anguish the change, and watched with aching

solicitude

ſolicitude the enſuing decline of her health.

In vain were the moſt eminent phyſicians conſulted, in vain were tried the effects of change of air, of climate, of company; nothing could tear from her boſom it's rooted ſorrow; ſhe fell into a conſumption, and her wretched parent, with feelings not to be deſcribed, watched the ravages of that fatal diſtemper, and ſaw with agonized ſoul the gradual approaches of death.

For near twelve months, with unremitting care, with unceaſing anguiſh, without one chearing ray of hope, did this unhappy mother watch over this drooping lilly, the darling of her fond heart, her only joy, her laſt remaining tie to life, and then—— Yet I know not whether the pangs of the

the laſt parting moment tore the ſoul with more excruciating agony than ſhe had before felt. With ſtreaming eyes, ſhe ſat beſide the coffin which contained all ſhe held dear on earth. She puſhed aſide the covering of the face, and gazed ardently on the lifeleſs features. A freſh burſt of tears forced their way; ſhe claſped her hands in agony together; ſhe aroſe—and in a pathetic ſilence, which ſpoke more forcibly than words the anguiſh of her ſoul, quitted the room.

Yet though all clamorous grief was ſuppreſſed by her good ſenſe, all murmurings and repinings by her piety, though ſhe ſuffered patiently, yet ſhe was ſtill a ſufferer; and her ſpirits were evidently ſo depreſſed, that the Ducheſs of L——, with whom ſhe had always been in habits of intimacy from

from childhood, became extremely alarmed, and by dint of importunity prevailed upon her to take a companion with her into the country, where ſhe perceived it was her determination to ſeclude herſelf from ſociety.

Perſiana's ſenſations in her new reſidence were like thoſe of a mariner who, being long toſt on a ſtormy and tempeſtuous ſea, ſuddenly and unexpectedly finds himſelf in a ſafe and pleaſant haven: the eaſe, the calm, the ſerenity ſhe experienced in this charming retreat, received a double zeſt from the contraſted ſcenes thro' which ſhe had paſſed; and in the ſoft melancholy of Mrs. Mildmay's mind ſhe found ſomething infinitely ſoothing to what ſhe was inclined to indulge in her own. Separated in all probability for ever from the object of her

her tendereſt affections, the gaiety which her more flattering proſpects would have inſpired received ſuch a check that Mrs. Mildmay found not only ſo much to admire in her accompliſhments, ſo much real entertainment in her converſation, but alſo ſo much ſympathy in her temper, as endeared her extremely to her; and her letters to the Ducheſs of L—— abounded in ſelf congratulations on the acquirement of ſuch a companion. But however ſoothing the indulgence of this penſive humour might be to both, it was by no means beneficial to the health of either; Perſiana grew pale and thin; a languor, a laſſitude crept over her; but Mrs. Mildmay was much worſe, and exhibited ſo many conſumptive ſymptoms, that her phyſician preſſed her very much

to

to try the air of the Continent; and acquainting Perſiana with his apprehenſions, ſhe joined her importunities with his with ſuch effect, that a very few weeks elapſed ere this pair of friends were found within the walls of Paris; for as Mrs. Mildmay was poſitively enjoined to get into company, and amuſe herſelf as much as poſſible, ſhe thought no place ſo likely as that gay metropolis to afford an agreeable variety of company and diverſions to her taſte.

Mrs. Mildmay had, before her marriage, reſided ſome years abroad with her father, who at that time was Ambaſſador at the court of the Empreſs, and afterwards with her huſband had been ſome time both in France and Italy; ſo that wherever ſhe went ſhe found herſelf perfectly at home; and

renewing her former acquaintance, which had been large amongſt the nobleſſe, introduced Perſiana to the firſt company every where, as a dear friend who ſupplied to her the place of her lamented daughter.

And indeed had ſhe been actually that daughter, our heroine could not have been treated with greater tenderneſs; all ideas of dependance were done away; a large annual ſtipend enabled her to dreſs in that high ſtyle in which her patroneſs ſeemed delighted to ſee her, to which preſents were continually added. Perſiana had made Mrs. Mildmay the unreſerved confidant of all her diſtreſſes, even of all the emotions of her heart in favour of Gordus, and neither had a ſecret unknown to the other.

Two

Two years rolled pleaſingly away in France, in Italy, and in the different German courts. Our heroine was diſtinguiſhed wherever ſhe went for her beauty and accompliſhments, and ſhe had ſome ſplendid matrimonial offers; but the idea of the graceful ſtroller was not to be eaſily ſupplanted; ſhe ſaw none yet who touched the utmoſt verge of the perfections perſonal and mental he poſſeſſed; ſhe felt an invincible repugnance, much as a permanent ſettlement for life would have been agreeable, to give her hand to one man when in her heart another had the decided preference, and ſhe put a civil negative on all their propoſals, notwithſtanding the gentle remonſtrances of her friend, who, as tender and as romantic as herſelf, though ſhe thought her attachment to

a man

a man who had never declared a paſſion for her, or ſought to engage her affections, imprudent, yet found herſelf much more inclined to pity than blame, and ſighed in apprehenſion that her friend would meet a ſimilar fate with her daughter.

But if our heroine did not get a huſband in this Continental excurſion, ſhe was in other reſpects by no means a loſer; but returned to England with brilliant ſpirits, exhilerated by the ſplendid ſcenes through which ſhe had paſſed, the not unpleaſing admiration ſhe had excited, and the reliance ſhe had on the permanent ſupport of her generous patroneſs, her perſon blooming in the higheſt health, and her manners improved to the moſt finiſhed poliſh.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.